Daily Report

Central Eurasia

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Terrorist Activity

Russia: Kidnapped Power Workers Escape to Groznyy

LD2402092396 Moscow ITAR-TASS World Service in Russian 0816 GMT 24 Feb 96

[By ITAR-TASS correspondent Aleksnadr Kharchenko]

[FBIS Translated Text] Groznyy, 24 Feb (ITAR-TASS) — The hostages who were kidnapped early this morning by unknown armed persons on the territory of TETs-3 [heating and electric power station No. 3] in Groznyy have returned to the town. The ITAR-TASS correspondent has just learned from unofficial sources that on their way out of town the kidnappers' car broke down. The power workers made use of this opportunity. The workers — who were on a tour of duty at Groznyy TETs and ended up being taken hostage, but fortunately avoided the fate of their predecessors — are residents of Neveninnomysk.

Military Activity

Russia: Federal Forces Shell Chechnya's Tsentoroy Village

LD2302155196 Moscow Russian Television Network in Russian 1400 GMT 23 Feb 96

[Report from Chechnya over video by correspondent M. Tkachev; from the "Vesti" newscast]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Tkachev] Our film crew was making its way to the village of Tsentoroy along country roads. The situation here has become more heated in the last 24 hours. There was some shelling last night. Also, the nearby village of Bachi-yurt was shelled several times. [video shows R. Shukulov, identified by caption as a resident of Tsentoroy, speaking to camera with a crowd of local residents looking on]

[Begin Shukulov recording] There are no fighters here. Yesterday the village of Bachi-yurt was shelled and there were casualties. There are wounded people. [end recording]

The wounded were taken to a safe place — the village of Goyty. Nearly all the inhabitants of Tsentoroy are now here in Bachi-yurt, waiting for the outcome of the events. We could approach the village only with a guide. [video cuts to show Tkachev standing on a country road with artillery salvoes heard in the background]

We are now 500 meters away from the village of Tsentoroy. It is now half past nine. At this moment a massive shelling of the village is under way. The federal troops moved up very close to the village. It was practically impossible for us to get there. All of this territory is controlled by snipers. Our guide, who went ahead and fell under snipers' fire, miraculously escaped alive. The inhabitants who still remain in the village are trying to get away to safer places. [video shows local inhabitants fleeing, destroyed village buildings]

It is now half past ten. Judging from the roar of engines, the fighting equipment is moving up to Tsentoroy.

Russia: Air Strike Launched on Chechen, Ingush Villages

LD2302174296 Moscow ITAR-TASS World Service in Russian 1625 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By ITAR-TASS correspondent Ruslan Maysigov]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Nazran, 23 Feb (ITAR-TASS) — An air strike was carried out at 1540 [1240 GMT] against the inhabited locality of Bamut in Chechnya and the outskirts of the village of Arshty in Ingushetia, the ITAR-TASS correspondent was told by representatives of Ingushetia's operational group. They said that the situation in the vicinity of the inhabited locality of Arshty in Sunzhenskiy District in the republic of Ingushetia on the Chechen border remains tense.

For the time being no data has come in about this latest strike. Ingushetian elders and Chairman of the Republic's Government Mukharbek Didigov met with representatives of the command of the federal troops deployed in this area. Russian State Duma deputy Viktor Kurochkin and Valeriy Guksa, minister for emergencies of the Republic of Ingushetia, left for Arshty to study the situation on the spot. Entry into Arshty is closed to journalists. [passage omitted]

Russia: Troops Reportedly Fire on Ingush Premier's Convoy

LD2402203296 Moscow NTV in Russian 1900 GMT 24 Feb 96

[From the "Segodnya" newscast]

[FBIS Translated Text] Here is the latest report from Ingushetia. INTERFAX has reported that Russian troop helicopters fired upon a motor vehicle column in which Ingush Prime Minister Mukharbek Didigov and his entourage were travelling. The press service of President [Ruslan] Aushev reported this.

The incident occurred when the prime minister was travelling in the vicinity of the mountainous villages of Arshty and Galashky, which are adjacent to Chechnya and are blockaded by Russian units.

According to the press service, several unguided missile salvos fired from the helicopters exploded tens of meters

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from the column in which special ambulances were also travelling.

The report stresses that the command of the troop grouping was informed of the movement of the government motor column.

Russia: Ingush Leaders Seek Explanation for Military Operations

LD2502145296 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1346 GMT 25 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] NAZRAN, Feb 25 (INTERFAX) — The Ingush leadership invited on Sunday to Nazran representatives of the 58th army command for explanations concerning the military operations conducted in the mountainous Ingush villages of Arshty and Galashki, Ingush Vice President Boris Agapov has told INTERFAX.

Federal troops were redeployed on February 22 in the Assinovskoye canyon from the Chechen territory without the knowledge of the Ingush leadership. Throughout the past three days, including on Sunday, the Ingush villages of Arshty and Galashki situated near the administrative border with Chechnya, were shelled from the Chechen village of Bamut, claim the official sources in Nazran.

According to Agapov, the battles in the region mean a spread of the Chechen conflict throughout the North Caucasus and the involvement of Ingushetia into the war.

This question, according to him, was discussed by a special session of the Ingush Security Council which called on the Russian command to pull out its troops immediately and stop the bloodshed.

According to Agapov, in the morning of February 25 Ingush President Ruslan Aushev had visited the villages of Arshty and Galashki to see the situation for himself.

According to Agapov, the Security Council also approved the address by the Ingush parliament to the republics and regions of the North Caucasus. It urges them "to take joint measures to prevent the spread of the war to the entire North Caucasus." It is proposed that "the leaders of the republics and regions meet in Nazran to discuss the situation, work out joint measures to restore peace and security for all peoples in the region."

The address levels sharp criticism against the Russian military leadership which, according to Nazran, "organizes uncontrolled and senseless fighting which can cause a spread of the war on the territory of Ingushetia and Dagestan."

Russia: Ingush Rally Demands Withdrawal of Federal Troops

LD2302204896 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1736 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Ruslan Maisigov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] NAZRAN, February 23 (ITAR-TASS) — Ingush vice-president Boris Agapov today condemned "unconstitutional actions" of the Russian troops which were brought to the republic, neighbouring rebel Chechnya, on Thursday [22 February]. Agapov spoke at a meeting devoted to the 52nd anniversary of the deportation of Ingush and Chechen peoples ordered by Soviet ruler Josef Stalin.

Agapov claimed the troops had killed and wounded a number of civilians on Thursday.

The Ingush leadership had to appeal to the Russian government and the public prosecutor requesting investigation into the events, Agapov said.

The participants called on the Russian leadership "to implement a law on rehabilitation of the repressed peoples and to withdraw federal forces from the territory of the Chechen republic."

However, Agapov addressed the people with a request not to lose self-control or yield to provocations.

The vice-president said "the republican leadership has been taking all measures to relief tension after bringing federal forces on the territory of Ingushetia."

Russia: Army Denies Blockading Ingush Villages

LD2502150596 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1346 GMT 25 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Feb 25 (INTERFAX) — A convoy of cars, including a car carrying Ingush Prime Minister Mukharbek Didigov and persons accompanying him, "came under fire by Russian helicopters," the Ingush presidential press service said Saturday.

Ingushetia is an internal Russian republic in the North Caucasus.

The incident took place when the Ingush prime minister was visiting Ingushetia's Arshty and Galashki villages in the mountains on the border with Chechnya [an internal Russian breakaway republic] [preceding note in square brackets supplied by INTERFAX] which have been blockaded by Russian military units, the same source said.

Several free-flight rockets launched by the helicopters blew up in several dozen meters away from the convoy

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which also included special ambulance vehicles, the Ingush presidential press service said.

The command of the group of Russian troops had been notified of the Ingush governmental convoy's trip, the same source said.

Earlier, Russian Ground Troops Commander-in-Chief, Col. Gen. Vladimir Semenov denied in an interview with INTERFAX that army units blockaded villages on Ingush territory. Furthermore, the information department of the Russian Defense Ministry said there had been no Russian military units on Ingush territory.

However, Ingush Vice President Boris Agapov said at a news conference in Nazran, the Ingush capital, Saturday that "federal troops have been brought to the republic in order to organize combat actions on its territory, which in fact means getting it involved into the war which is under way in Chechnya," the Ingush presidential press service said.

Ingush President Ruslan Aushev, who returned to Nazran from Moscow Saturday, held an extraordinary session of the Ingush Security Council in the republic's capital.

As of February 25 three civilians were killed and 11 wounded as a result of federal troops firing at the outskirts of Ingushetia's Arshty village, the Ingush presidential press service said.

Earlier, Agapov told INTERFAX in an interview that the civilian casualties had occurred as a result of a firefight between Chechen separatist guerillas and Russian federal forces. The Arshty village was caught in a cross fire conducted by separatist rebels from Chechnya's Bamut village near the border with Ingushetia and a group of federal troops deployed near the Galashki village in the Assinovskoye gorge, Ingushetia, Agapov said.

Russia: Commander Admits Troops 'Moving Up' in Ingushetia

LD2502181796 Moscow NTV in Russian 1600 GMT 25 Feb 96

[From the "Itogi" program]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Ingush authorities have demanded the immediate withdrawal of federal forces from villages on the Chechen border. The republican prosecutor's office is preparing the appropriate documents on the troops' activities on the territory of Ingushetia.

Relations between the center and Nazran have deteriorated to such an extent that the Ingush authorities, according to ITAR-TASS, have announced it is inexpedient to hold the Ingush Cultural Days in Moscow between 29 February and 2 March, and plan to postpone them to a later date, until the issue of withdrawal of federal troops from the territory of Ingushetia has been resolved.

Meanwhile, according to Russian and foreign news agency reports, the villages bordering on Chechnya were still being shelled up to this morning. Correspondents of the NTV Television North Caucasus now report from Ingushetia.

[Correspondent] The situation in Ingushetia remains tense over the events around Arshty village. The federal troops blockaded the settlement two days ago. Units of the 58th Army took up positions in the immediate vicinity of a number of Ingush villages on the border with the Chechen Republic. It has been virtually impossible to get into Arshty for three days now. Neither local inhabitants, nor journalists, nor representatives of the International Red Cross are allowed access. According to Jean-Louis Richard, head of the Red Cross delegation in Nazran, medicine and a qualified surgeon have been made ready to help the inhabitants in the blockaded village, but the doctors were not allowed into Arshty even today. The International Red Cross intends to lobby through its representatives in Groznyy, Moscow, and Geneva for people wishing to leave Arshty to be given the opportunity to do so. According to Richard, three civilians have been killed and 11 wounded in the village. The Arshty head of administration confirmed this. His attempts to hold talks with the military have not met with success. [passage omitted]

Rallies against the spread of civil war were held in various districts in Ingushetia today. One of the biggest was in the village of Galashki, a few kilometers from Arshty. Ingush President Ruslan Aushev attended the rally, and appealed to the demonstrators to maintain calm. Ingushetia's official position on the incident is pretty tough: it is considered that any movement of troops through the republic's territory should be coordinated with the Ingush authorities. [passage omitted]

General Nikolay [as heard] Troshev, the commander of the 58th Army, had a meeting with Ruslan Aushev this afternoon. Before the meeting, he expounded his view on what was happening.

[Begin Troshev recording] We carried out a march across the territory of Russia. There were no hostilities and no shelling, as the press has said. There are no blockaded settlements, there are none now, none at all. I stake my head on that. During the march, I lost 14 men, including an officer, a battalion commander; 20 of my men were wounded, and one man is missing. As for the civilian population [casualties], I still don't know who is saying this or where they are, just show me them, but

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I can show you my casualties, dead, and wounded. I'll show you them right now. [end recording]

[Correspondent] However, after talking to the Ingush president, Nikolay Troshev agreed with Aushev's arguments and admitted that the subunits under his command were not carrying a march, but were moving up. Ruslan Aushev thus managed to persuade the Russian Federation general that he, Aushev, was in the right, Kurezh Agasiyev, the Ingush president's press secretary, told journalists. The thing people in Ingushetia fear most of all now is that Arshty should meet the same fate as Pervomayskoye.

Russia: Ingushetia Calm as Federal Troops Withdraw

LD2602094396 Moscow INFORMATSIONNOYE AGENTSTVO EKHO MOSKVY in Russian 0820 GMT 26 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] [no dateline as received] — Troops began withdrawing from the Ingush villages of Arshty and Galashki at 1000 on 26 February, Kureysh Agasiyev, the Ingush president's press secretary, told Ekho Moskvy radio station.

He said that after Ingush President Ruslan Aushev met with Gennadiy Troshev, commander of the Russian Defense Ministry's 58th Army, on 25 February, artillery shelling ceased around Arshty on the afternoon of the 25, and by the evening only sporadic small arms fire could be heard. A convoy of humanitarian aid, ambulances, and representatives of the Ingush Interior Ministry was able to drive up to Arshty the same evening. The night passed relatively calmly.

Agasiyev said that Ingush Interior Ministry militia detachments have been posted along the entire Rostov-Baku federal highway to observe order during the troops withdrawal.

The situation in the republic is in general calm, but rallies are under way in Nazran and Sleptsovskaya. In Nazran, several thousand people are demanding that those responsible [for the Arshty incident] be punished.

At his meeting with Troshev, Aushev declared that whatever happened, representatives of the public prosecutor's office will start investigating the incident. In addition, documents are being drawn up to bring a suit demanding recompense for the material damage caused, Agasiyev said.

Russia: Troops Blame Militants for Provoking Operation

LD2602154196 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1513 GMT 26 Feb 96

[By Mikhail Shevtsov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, February 26 (ITAR-TASS) — A motorized infantry battalion on Monday moved away from the Ingush populated locality Arshty, situated several kilometres away from the Chechen border, and began advancing to the Chechen territory by another route under the order of Lieutenant-General Gennadiy Troshev, commander of the 58th army of federal troops.

The battalion is soon to leave the Assivovskaya gorge, to reach the Rostov-Baku route and to advance toward Chechnya, the press centre of the North Caucasian military district told ITAR-TASS.

Part of the column of federal troops entered Rostov-Baku route and was moving toward Chechnya by midday, ITAR-TASS reported from Ingushetia.

Representatives of the federal forces set out once again their view of the incident that occurred in Arshty district. According to a report of the press centre of the North Caucasian military district, the first battalion of regiment 693 of the 58th army, stationed in Vladikavkaz, was sent to Chechnya over the Ingush territory on February 21 "as planned replacement."

A group of militants attacked the battalion in the area of the Ingush populated locality Arshty on February 22. The militants opened heavy fire on the left flank from machine guns, flame throwers and grenade launchers and from various fire arms.

After that the battalion of federal forces entered the engagement. During the two-day engagement, fourteen servicemen of the federal forces were killed and 20 wounded. The battalion's commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Eduard Sinikashvili, was killed.

The press centre of the North Caucasian military district stated that it were militants who provoked combat operations in the Ingush territory to whip up the flames of war. "It is extremely alarming that bandits from Chechnya find safe haven in Ingushetia. They violated tranquility in the area more than once and attacked servicemen of federal service," the press centre report says.

Colonel Yakov Firsov, the head of the press centre, noted that "contrary to the claims made through the media, federal troops were not brought into the Ingush

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territory but were only moving over the territory, according to the plan."

Representatives of the Ingush leadership said they are not interested in the spread of the Chechen conflict to the Ingush territory. In view of the socio-political situation in the republic they are going to insist that federal troops should get their consent to their movement over the Ingush territory. It is a lack of coordination that led to the worsening of the situation, Ingush leaders believe.

Meanwhile, a high representative of the Russian Defence Ministry who wished that his name not be given told ITAR-TASS that the motorised infantry battalion of the 58th army was fulfilling a task in the Russian territory and it was hardly expedient to reveal the plans of the military in advance. He believes that the enforced pullback of troops from the Assivovskaya gorge was something on which the Dudayev supporters counted. The Dudayev men created a reinforced district in the area of Bamut not far from the border of Ingushetia. Otherwise the federal forces would have succeeded in blocking the militants, the representative of the Defence Ministry said.

Political Reaction

Russia: Minister's Resignation Shows Split in Chechen Leadership

MM2602140596 Moscow KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA in Russian 24 Feb 96 pp 1, 3

[Report by Mikhail Morozov: "Why Did Dudayev's Minister Prefer Antalya to Chechnya?"]

[FBIS Translated Text] People in Russia already seem to have begun to get acclimatized to Chechen terrorism. There are even signs of some apathy and resignation on the faces of passengers in the Moscow subway. Habit is setting in and the sense of danger is receding.

However, it transpired that some people take this danger very seriously. The resignation statement issued 20 February by Shamseddin Yusef, foreign minister in Dudayev's government, sounded very surprising at first glance. For several years this close comrade in arms of Dudayev inspired and organized outside aid for the Chechen regime. While in Turkey and enjoying the confidence of the Turkish leadership, he coordinated vigorous activity by Chechens living outside Russia who backed the Dudayevite militia in word and deed. Yusef worked selflessly, then suddenly abandoned his beloved job, and what is more even caused a furor.

Rumors are going around Chechens in Turkey that he was mixed up in money dealings involving his duties as sutler to supply the guerrillas. In interviews he hinted that he knew things about the Chechen terrorists' bloody plans that would cause the whole world to quake. It is quite possible that the events in Pervomayskoye and Trabzon awoke the minister's common sense and he said that he would not go along with Dudayev. "I think it irresponsible to intimidate the whole world and talk about carrying terrorism and military operations throughout the Caucasus, Turkey, and Europe. This is contrary to my concepts for state building. Only a criminal zone can be formed by means of intimidation," Yusef wrote in his message to the press.

Evidently, the idea of terror has so overwhelmed Dudayev's comrades in arms that they have begun to use it against one another. According to Yusef, a week ago he was subjected to an attack organized by another member of the Republic of Ichkeria's "government." It is a shame that Yusef's misgivings had not previously occurred to the Turkish leadership, which took a lenient view of the Chechens' activity on their territory.

Reports have appeared in local newspapers that the Turkish authorities have taken additional steps to stop mercenaries being brought to Chechnya through their territory. Steps have been taken but everyone can still get through. This was shown recently by two Turkish journalists who published an interview with Dudayev in SABAH. It was not the general's actual words that were interesting but the travel notes written by the Turkish writers, who described in detail their long journey from Turkey to Chechnya and back. The SABAH journalists had no accreditation or visas and did not get tied up with formalities at all. They visited Dudayev illegally. They crossed the Turkish-Azerbaijani border. And infiltrated Russia via Azerbaijani territory. They passed 17 (!) Russian troop checkpoints in Dagestan without passports. Admittedly, the Turks write that this was a costly pleasure for them, but on the other hand they did safely reach the administrative border with Chechnya. And here they were on "home" ground where they were greeted by Chechen guides.

Without belittling the "merits" of the Russian Border Service and Army personnel at the checkpoints, who showed enviable hospitality, it must be acknowledged that our Turkish colleagues had lost their sense of danger. After all, they took risks in crossing a few borders, violating a host of Russian laws, and just by traveling to such a troubled area.

I would very much like to find out what needs to happen in order for everyone to become aware of the extreme danger of what is happening and recover their sense of self-preservation. Just as former Minister Yusef has done by deciding to quit the bloody game.

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Russia: Duma Proposes Commission on Peaceful Chechen Settlement

LD2302230296 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1916 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Feb 23 (INTERFAX) — The State Duma, Russian parliament's lower chamber, has proposed to Russian President Boris Yeltsin, government, Federation Council (parliament's upper chamber) and judicial authorities that an interdepartmental commission on peaceful settlement of the crisis in Chechnya be created.

A total of 241 Duma deputies today backed the decision, while three deputies voted against it. To pass, the decision needed 226 votes in favor.

A proposal that the commission's name should not include the word "peaceful" failed to pass because only 167 deputies backed it.

Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Nationalities Vladimir Zorin said the commission's name reflected the Duma's position regarding the ways to settle the Chechen crisis.

Russia: Chechens Seen Turning Against Russian People

MM2302171896 Moscow IZVESTIYA in Russian 24 Feb 96 p 1

[Report by special correspondent Igor Rotar: "Chechen Villages of Alleroy and Tsentoroy Destroyed"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Chechnya — It can confidently be claimed that the Chechen villages of Alleroy and Tsentoroy no longer exist. For the past week federal troops have been shelling these population centers practically continuously. Approximately 50 percent of the houses have already been totally destroyed. The people who have stayed in the villages are living in cellars. There is no possibility of taking the dead to the cemetery, so they are being buried in the yards of their own homes. By now the majority of the civilian residents have already left the villages: People leave at night — in the intervals between shelling — and make their way along mountain paths to the nearest Chechen villages, bypassing the federal forces' positions.

In the village of Meskhesti, which is several kilometers from Alleroy, I met with an extremely agitated crowd of refugees. Probably for the first time in a year of periodic trips to Chechnya I witnessed local residents venting their anger not only at the federal troops but at the entire Russian people.

"When the Germans were in Chechnya, they did nothing bad to us. But you Russians kill us once every 50 years!", Kubad Barshigova, a 60-year-old refugee from Alleroy, charged. "The gunmen's position is right on the outskirts of the village. They do not come inside the village. But your artillery is hitting the homes of peaceful residents. Why do the Russian troops not make a corridor for the civilian population to leave by? It is, I believe, not the annihilation of gunmen but the extermination of all Chechens that is the Russians' chief goal," Khalimat Bakhtayeva said.

The changes in the local population's views are quite symptomatic. For a very long time Chechens distinguished the federal soldiers who were killing them from the Russian people as a whole. But the situation is changing today, and more and more people are talking of a Russian-Chechen war.

The settlement of Novogroznenskiy and the villages of Alleroy and Tsentoroy are really close to the mountain massifs in southeast Chechnya where the main forces of Dudayev's gunmen are concentrated. Last spring the federal troops were already trying to seize this region from the west — from the direction of the village of Vedeno — but the attack got bogged down then. Moscow has evidently changed tactic now and launched an offensive from the northeast. Large-scale warfare is continuing.

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CIS: Countries Report GDP Decline During Reforms

LD2502143496 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1346 GMT 25 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Feb 25 (INTERFAX) — During the period of reforms GDP in Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Russia fell to the level of the early 1980-s, in Tajikistan and Ukraine to the middle of the 1970-s, in Armenia and Kazakhstan to the early 1970-s, in Moldova to the late 1960-s and in Azerbaijan to the late 1950-s, the INTERFAX-AiF weekly says in its new edition.

The CIS 1995 GDP was only 58 percent of 1990 levels, according to the CIS Inter-State Statistics Committee.

However, the CIS countries seriously scaled back inflation in 1995. For the first time during the period of reforms some industries in the CIS countries posted growth in 1995. The situation regarding housing construction and foreign trade has improved. Nevertheless, decline in GDP has continued and averaged 5 percent in the CIS in 1995 against 15 percent in 1994, INTERFAX-AiF says.

Under the dollar's exchange rate set by the CIS central banks, the average wage in December 1995 was $16 in Azerbaijan (against $10 in December 1994), $20 in Armenia ($12), $88 in Belarus ($30), $113 in Kazakhstan ($79), $43 in Kyrgyzstan ($38), $55 in Moldova ($46), $167 in Russia ($119), $5 in Tajikistan ($15), $45 in Uzbekistan ($23) and $76 in Ukraine ($34).

CIS: ITAR-TASS Carries Press Review for 24 Feb

LD2402072196 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 0713 GMT 24 Feb 96

["Press Review" — ITAR-TASS headline]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, February 24 (ITAR-TASS) — Russian newspapers publish on Saturday President Boris Yeltsin's State of the Nation message to the Russian parliament. "This is the third document of this type sent by the president to legislators, starting from 1994," the trade union newspaper TRUD writes.

"The message by the head of state is called "Russia for which we are responsible" and reflects his vision of the country's present situation and the future".

"The president demanded in his message that the course for reforms should be continued," the IZVESTIYA newspaper writes. Analysing the president's speech, the daily writes: "Deputies and political leaders invited to the Kremlin perceived the president's speech as part of his election platform.

"This conclusion is also shared by some assistants of the president, who reported that the platform 'in its pure form' will be made public in the near future."

Russian newspapers give extensive coverage to the coming presidential elections in Russia. The KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA newspaper reports that "dozens of underground syndicates to collect false signatures for future 'masters of the Russian land' operate throughout Russia.

"The average price is 3,000 roubles per signature. Each presidential candidate will receive a round sum of 14,437 million roubles from the Central Election Commission for election expenses," the newspaper writes.

"To receive this pretty sum, it is necessary to do not very much: to collect one million signatures by April 16 and to hand them over to the Central Election Commission."

IZVESTIYA points to a new election race trend in Russia: "If there was nobody to choose from under communists, there are now over 30 presidential candidates". A certain Yan Koltunov from the Moscow Region also plans to join the presidential race.

IZVESTIYA reporter Kirill Svetitskiy found him out and described in the newspaper under the headline "Self-programmed presidential candidate".

Writing in the same newspaper, politologist Liliya Shevtsova examines possible steps by the main hopefuls for the highest state post — Yeltsin, Zyuganov, Zhirinovskiy, Lebed and Yavlinskiy — in the article "Polls: game with many unknowns".

"The president and his team are totally unready for a defeat," the author notes. "This confidence in victory lurks a great danger for society, since their reaction may be irrational in case of a defeat".

The RABOCHAYA TRIBUNA newspaper features an interview with Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka who will come to Moscow on an official visit on February 27. The Belarusian leader noted that he attaches much importance to his first official visit to Moscow.

Speaking about rapprochement between countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Lukashenka said: "We are ready for a very broad integration. However, it has nothing to do with allegations that Belarus would become well-neigh a region of the Russian Federation in the very near future. This is just impossible".

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According to the president, "it is very important that Belarus and Russia created economic space where rules of the game are identical 50 percent. Integration between the two states can make big headway.

"However, there is no need for blabbering on restoration of the Soviet Union. This is unrealistic now," the Belarusian chief executive stressed.

Commenting on a visit by Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov to Kazakhstan, the ROSSIISKAYA GAZETA newspaper notes: "Yevgeniy Primakov admitted that there are differences between the two countries in tackling the Caspian issue. However, they are not so serious as to put into doubt the need for integration between the two countries".

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Russia: Yeltsin Signs Law on Membership in Council of Europe

LD2302155796 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1118 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Feb 23 (Interfax) — President Boris Yeltsin signed a federal law on Russia's joining of the Council of Europe's Charter Friday. The law was adopted by the State Duma and approved by the parliament's upper chamber, sources at the presidential press service told Interfax.

Under the law, spending on Russian membership in the Council of Europe, including that on Russian obligations to international agreements, will be dealt with by the federal budget.

Russia: Primakov: Relations With Central, E. Europe 'Priority'

LD2402193096 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1649 GMT 24 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Feb 24 (Interfax) - The development of relations with Central and East Europe is a priority of Russia's foreign policy, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said at a briefing Saturday after meeting with his Bulgarian counterpart Georgi Pirinski in Moscow.

This region has become even more important for Russia because many of the region's countries, except Bulgaria, have applied for NATO membership, Primakov said.

"We cannot veto one or another decision by this region's countries and we have no intention of doing so," Primakov said. "We would like to show by developing our relations that these countries are absolutely under no threat," he said.

Primakov said his talks with the Bulgarian foreign minister "showed once again that our approaches to nearly all problems either converge or are very close."

Pirinski said his talks with Primakov were "concrete and promising." The two countries spoke out in favor of building a European security system which would rule out any confrontation or creation of separation lines, he said.

Pirinski also said he had briefed Primakov on Bulgaria's initiative regarding cooperation in the Balkans. Bulgaria has proposed that a conference between foreign ministers of all countries in the Balkans be held.

The conference should focus on two groups of problems, including contribution to the full implementation of the Dayton peace agreements on settlement in the Balkans and coordination of possible actions to develop all-Balkan cooperation in South-East Europe, he said.

Primakov said Russia displayed serious interest in the Bulgarian initiative.

Russia: UN Envoy Announces Lifting of Sanctions Against Serbs

LD2302205196 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 2038 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Sergey Baybakov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] UNITED NATIONS, February 23 (Itar-Tass) - Russia has suspended its part of the sanctions against Bosnian Serbs, the Russian permanent envoy to the U.N. Security Council, Sergey Lavrov, told the council on Friday.

He quoted the sanction-suspending decree of President Boris Yeltsin, already in effect.

This, Lavrov said, ensures the response of Russian legislation to the Security Council's Resolution 1022 which mandates the automatic lifting of the sanctions immediately after Bosnia's conflicting forces moves from disengagement zones.

NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana informed U.N. Secretary-General Butrus Butrus-Ghali in his letter of January 23 that the parties had complied with the demand to withdraw their forces from the zones.

"Russia's decision means its conscientious and meticulous fulfilment of Resolution 1022. We expect other Security Council members to act in a similar way," Lavrov said in an interview with Itar-Tass.

He stressed that Russia's move is in no way qualifiable as a unilateral act.

"We reaffirm our position of principle that we will not take part in any 'retroactive' interpretation of Resolution 1022 which has direct effect," Lavrov said.

The resolution must be complied with, and the Security Council may not re-interpret it, he continued.

Lavrov dismissed as untenable the arguments that the sanctions should be left in place as a lever on Pale.

In addition, the sanctions can be re-introduced at any moment if Bosnian Serbs flout their obligations, Lavrov argued.

Keeping the sanctions in place would in fact spell their use as a tool for political punishment of Bosnian Serbs, which would be beyond the bounds of the Security Council's resolutions, he said.

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Russia: Yeltsin Lifts Sanctions on Bosnian Serbs

LD2402105496 Moscow Radio Rossii Network in Russian 1000 GMT 24 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Russian President Boris Yeltsin in an instruction issued on 23 February has lifted sanctions against the Bosnian Serb Republic. The president's instruction says that this step has been taken because the Bosnian Serb side has fulfilled the conditions specified by the UN Security Council. The document provides for the unfreezing of all previously blocked resources and assets of state and commercial organizations under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation.

The president has instructed the Federal Security Service; the Ministries of Finance, Justice, and Foreign Economic Links; and other departments to bring all the necessary normative acts into line with this instruction. The Foreign Ministry has been instructed to try to achieve as soon as possible the conditions needed for the complete lifting of sanctions against the Serb Republic.

Russia's unilateral departure from the sanctions regime against the Bosnian Serbs does not mean a split in the Contact Group in the UN Security Council. This was stated today in an INTERFAX interview by Foreign Ministry official spokesman Grigoriy Karasin. He stressed that Russia's partners knew that Moscow was moving toward lifting sanctions. The Russian Federation has frequently stated that it would lift sanctions as soon as the relevant UN Security Council conditions were totally fulfilled. This has now happened, Karasin said.

Russia: Germany's Kohl Interviewed on Relations With Russia

LD2502214696 Moscow Russian Public Television First Channel Network in Russian 1900 GMT 25 Feb 96

[Interview with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl by unidentified correspondent; place, date not given — recorded; interview is conducted in German with superimposed Russian translation]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Correspondent] Mr. Chancellor, Germany has invested more resources in Russia than any other Western country, mainly in the form of loans and credits. Are you disturbed at the way events are developing in Russia, from the viewpoint of cooperation with Germany?

[Kohl] No, I'm not disturbed. I never expected the reforms to be completed quickly in Russia. Such major changes don't take place overnight. Many people in Germany and the West in general, people who are a long way from your country, offer advice to Russia on what to do next. But the processes taking place in your country are very complex indeed. Compared to Russia's problems, our problems with reunification were far fewer. But we still have hundreds of them. So when I look to Russia I say to myself, I believe in the future of this country and its strength, but the future does not come overnight.

[Correspondent] You held talks with President Yeltsin, whom, as far as we know, you consider to be a personal friend. How did the Russian president look to you this time round, after entering the election campaign?

[Kohl] To my joy, Boris Yeltsin gave the impression of a very healthy man. Just a few days ago I was talking to him in Paris at Francois Mitterrand's memorial ceremony, and he looked fine then. At the moment he's healthy, as effective as ever, and very decisive. He knows what he wants. He's going to fight, and that's excellent.

[Correspondent] Germany still actively supports NATO expansion to the east. But the impression now is that you've started calling for a more cautious approach. Is that right?

[Kohl] I don't entirely agree with that interpretation. Compared to last year, I'm not pushing the issue so hard. But I have always said that eastern European countries are entitled to join NATO. Poland, for example. But I've also always said that we have to take account of the domestic situation in Russia and its security interests. I have no doubt that there are sensible options available, and we have every chance of seeing that Russia's concerns are catered for. We have lots of ideas, but only time to discuss the best ones. Russia held elections in December, and is facing presidential elections. You also know that the presidential race has begun in the United States and the result will be clear in November. In a year like this one, an issue like NATO expansion can't top the agenda. There's a lot of emotion surrounding this issue, so it would be a mistake to hold lengthy debates right now.

[Correspondent] Mr. Chancellor, there are many debates in the West at the moment on Russia's future. Some say it could turn back to the past, others say that's impossible. What is your opinion on that?

[Kohl] You can see extensive change everywhere in Russia. Moscow is changing right before your eyes. That shows history is moving, not standing still. We Germans have a saying: the wheel of history turns. So it turns for you. I saw many young people out in the streets, they like music and to go to discotheques, and they think about it — they don't want to go back to

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the past. They want to go forward to the 21st century, which begins in four years' time. I also saw older people in the streets, of course, and I know they have small pensions and many problems in life. But this is what I say: I was 15 when the war with Germany ended. And when I think about those three hard years from 1945 to 1948, I understand that back then nobody in Germany could imagine how the Federal Republic of Germany would look today. The Russian people are a great people, and we want to help you, so that you can begin to help yourselves. You're our neighbors, and I hope for a successful outcome to your reforms. And I believe in your future.

[Correspondent] Mr. Chancellor, thank you for your optimism.

[Kohl] Thank you.

Russia: Minister Tells Castro Nuclear Power Plant To Be Completed

LD2302175996 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1745 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Konstantin Zhukovskiy]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] HAVANA, February 23 (Itar-Tass) - Cuban leader Fidel Castro met Russian Minister for Atomic Energy Viktor Mikhaylov, who is on a working visit to Cuba.

The talk centered on cooperation in civilian nuclear projects, Mikhaylov said in an interview with Itar-Tass.

"The opinion of Fidel Castro concerning the operation of the nuclear power plant in Juragua is absolutely positive: he thinks it (plant) should be finished, too much had been invested in it — about one billion dollars," Mikhaylov said.

The plant project cannot be abandoned, the minister said.

"Resources and possibilities should be found to put in operation at least the first power unit of it by the end of this decade," he said.

Castro was quoted as promising his efforts "for the Cuban side also to contribute to the completion of the first unit, although Cuba's possibilities are certainly limited today".

Castro voiced satisfaction that Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets visited Havana in late October of 1995.

That visit paved the way for reestablishment of economic contacts between Russia and Cuba, Castro said.

Mikhaylov said his visit was an extension of Soskovets'. Its goal was to fill with substance the general outlay of cooperation agreed between the two countries in October.

Russia: Officials Demand Quality Guarantees on U.S. Poultry

LD2302181096 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1701 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Feb 23 (Interfax) - The Veterinary Department of the Russian Agriculture and Food Ministry has suspended the issue of licenses for the import of poultry from the United States and may ban such imports completely from March 16. This will happen if the U.S. side does not provide by that time guarantees of its meeting the requirements of poultry quality agreed upon between the Russian side and the U.S. Veterinary Service, Interfax learnt Friday from Vyacheslav Avilov, head of the Veterinary Department and chief Russian veterinary inspector.

He said the department had to take such stern measures because products of poor quality were brought into Russia. The measures were taken as a result of an inspection conducted by Russian experts of 50 poultry processing plants and 30 refrigerators in the United States. According to Avilov, none of the inspected enterprises met veterinary requirements.

In addition, Avilov said U.S. experts do not make necessary analyses that would guarantee the products' quality, which is why Russian consumers take risks when buying the poultry.

Avilov stressed that the requirements set by the Russian are no stricter than the existing international standards and are aimed at preventing infected poultry from getting to Russia and at guaranteeing the quality of the products for domestic consumers.

Commenting on the results of a meeting with a delegation of the U.S. department of Agriculture held in Moscow on February 15-16, Avilov said the U.S. side did not reject the department's claims and promised to take measures to ensure that quality products be supplied to Russia.

According to the Russian Trade Committee's State Inspectorate for Trade, Quality of Products and Protection of Consumers' Rights, over 3,000 tonnes of imported poultry, or 22 percent of the inspected amount, were declared below quality standards. According to the inspectorate experts, inspected poultry accounts for not more than 4 percent of all imports.

According to the U.S. department of Agriculture, Russia imported U.S. poultry for $500 million in 1995.

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Russia: Joint Project To Be Launched With U.S. Oil Company

LD2302221496 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1904 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Irina Bolsheva]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, February 23 (Itar-Tass) — Leaders of the Russian oil company Yukos and the U.S. Amoco on Friday [23 February] said that a joint oil project estimated to be worth 85 billion dollars is to start off in 1996.

In addition, more cooperative projects have been mapped out today at negotiations between the two companies.

Yukos' president Sergey Muravlenko said at a news conference on Friday that the project is to develop five newly discovered oil-fields in the basin of the Ob river and expand refinery facilities in Russia and in the CIS.

Two Yukos-Amoco filling stations are to be opened in Moscow in 1997. Another plan is to start joint production of auto oils.

A major party in the negotiations was the Russian bank Menatep which has a 78 per cent package in Yukos.

Muravlenko said the World Bank is expected to grant a loan to fund a major part of the Ob field development.

However, domestic investment remains to be found too, and Menatep undertakes to attract interior loans, Muravlenko said.

He said the Yukos-Menatep alliance was a rare example of effective cooperation between a Russian corporation and a major bank.

"We have managed to avoid the problems which, for example, arose between Norilsk Nikel and Oneximbank which became a pledge-holder of the government's holding in that steel plant (Norilsk Nikel)," Muravlenko said.

The contract with Menatep has provided Yukos with sizable finance essential for normal production. This is to partially relive Yukos' shortage of working capital, promising smooth production and oil shipments to customers.

Menatep gets in Yukos a reliable debtor, Muravlenko said.

Russia: Pyongyang To Further Economic, Political Ties With Russia

LD2302183696 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1733 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Aleksandr Valiyev]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, February 23 (Itar-Tass) — The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is prepared at any moment to intensify economic and political ties with Russia, the North Korean Ambassador to the Russian Federation Son Sung-pil told Russian journalists here today.

According to him, the peoples of the two countries will only win by the strengthening of mutual cooperation, and lose much if they are guided by the feelings of hostility and distrust.

Relations between the Russian Federation and North Korea have essentially deteriorated since 1991, especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Last year the volume of the trade turnover between the two countries totalled only about 100 million U.S. dollars.

A meeting of the inter-government commission for trade-and-economic, and scientific-and-technical cooperation which should be held as soon as possible, will be of great importance for the intensification of mutual ties, the North Korean ambassador believes.

Pyongyang is prepared for such a meeting but it has been postponed for several years because of the domestic problems of the Russian side. Incidentally, the Russian leadership repeatedly dismissed and appointed Russian co-chairmen of the commission, the Korean diplomat accentuated.

North Korea intends to further develop contacts between the two countries in the economic and trade sphere, as well as the establishment of joint ventures, the ambassador emphasised.

Son Sung-pil stressed the need to make more active cooperation in the field of joint logging and agriculture on the Russian Far East where both states have already accumulated a certain experience in interaction.

Russia: Moscow: DPRK Embassy Intruder Incident 'Has Been Settled'

SK2302145096 Moscow Voice of Russia World Service in Korean 1200 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In a news conference held on 22 February, Grigoriy Karasin, director of the Information and Publication Bureau of the Russian Foreign Ministry, said that the incident involving Cho Myong-kil, the

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Korean citizen who intruded into the Russian Embassy in Pyongyang, has been settled.

According to Russia's trade mission officials, Cho Myong-kil killed himself when DPRK agents stormed into the embassy building. However, Pyongyang insist that Cho Myong-kil is still alive.

The spokesman said that the Russian Embassy in Pyongyang continues its work as usual.

Touching on the fate of ITAR-TASS journalist Ivan Zakharchenko, the Foreign Ministry spokesman stated that Russia will protect the rights of Russian journalists. Ivan Zakharchenko has been accused by Pyongyang of slandering the DPRK with false reports.

Russia: Nikitin in Isolation, Charged With Spying

BR2302144896 Oslo ARBEIDERBLADET in Norwegian 23 Feb 96 p 14

[Report by Asne Guldahl Seiersted: "Nikitin in Isolation"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Moscow — Bellona worker Aleksandr Nikitin is in his third week of isolation, without being allowed to meet his lawyer.

"This is not unique. The closedness of Russia is a trend that is spreading," said Aleksandr Yablokov, environmental adviser on the Russian Security Council.

"Developments in Russia are alarming," Aleksandr Yablokov told ARBEIDERBLADET. "I know of several other similar cases, despite the fact that there is a law in Russia that environmental issues are not state secrets. The only thing we can hope for its that other countries will exert pressure on the Russian Government."

Aleksandr Nikitin was arrested at home on 6 February, charged with spying because of the work he has done for the Bellona environmental organization. The possible sentence is 10 to 15 years' imprisonment or the death sentence.

Dismissed Criticism

Russian Foreign Ministry press spokesman Grigoriy Karasin stressed yesterday that he has complete respect for Bellona's work and bids them welcome in Russia, but that Aleksandr Nikitin has broken Russian law. "He has sold sensitive information to foreign organizations," Grigoriy Karasin told ARBEIDERBLADET, dismissing the suggestion that Russia is on its way toward becoming a more closed society.

Nikitin is not being allowed to meet his lawyer, Yuriy Schmidt. The Russian security service, FSB, is demanding that Schmidt must accept his mail being opened and his telephone tapped for the rest of his life. In addition, he may not travel abroad for the next five years.

"I do not know when I will be able to meet my client. If the Russian Government is put under pressure, whether from Al Gore, the Council of Europe, or from the Norwegian prime minister, it can tell the FSB to let me in immediately," Yuriy Schmidt told ARBEIDERBLADET.

"Since taking the Nikitin case both I and my friends have been tailed and I suspect the security service of tapping my telephone," Nikitin's lawyer said.

Well Under the Circumstances

Yuriy Schmidt met his client for 15 minutes last week. Nikitin is being held in the FSB's isolation unit for prisoners under investigation in St. Petersburg and the lawyer said that he is well given the circumstances. "He is living in a two-man room and he said that the conditions are better than on board the Soviet submarines on which he served in the past," Schmidt said.

Aleksandr Nikitin has been adopted as an urgent case prisoner by Amnesty International.

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Political Issues

Russia: Yeltsin Addresses Federal Assembly 23 Feb

LD2302105896 Moscow Russian Television Network in Russian 0800 GMT 23 Feb 96

[Address by Russian President Boris Yeltsin to Federal Assembly in the Kremlin's Marble Hall — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] Esteemed members of the Federation Council, esteemed deputies of the State Duma, esteemed compatriots and citizens of Russia: I am happy to greet you on this solemn day when we are honoring the defenders of the fatherland. First of all, I would like to congratulate Russian servicemen on this holiday and wish good health to veterans of the Armed Forces and the defense industry. There are people of different views and convictions in this hall but I believe that we all agree that Russian servicemen deserve our warmest congratulations. [audience applauds]

The members of the Federation Council and the deputies of the State Duma of the previous convocation managed to rise above narrow party interests and carry out their work for the sake of the people of Russia in a short period of time and in spite of the absence of established parliamentary traditions. Your predecessors did not manage to do everything they had planned. Nevertheless, their work experience is an example of how democracy serves the interests of all people. Esteemed parliamentarians, let me express the hope that your work will be equally constructive.

In accordance with the established tradition and in keeping with the Russian Constitution, I am addressing the Federal Assembly and the country's citizens with a message today. I will not be repeating what is written in the text of the message. I hope that every parliamentarian will closely study it. My task is to analyze the results of the development of the country and Russian society and dwell on the most important problems facing Russia this year.

Russia approached 1996 after four years of difficult but inevitable reforms. At the end of 1991 the country was on the brink of economic catastrophe and bankruptcy. Only energetic and decisive steps could rescue the situation then. The question that is being asked by the country's citizens, and I think should be answered in this hall today is: What has been done in the four years of the reforms?

First, the disintegration of Russia has been averted. The onset of chaos has been stopped. The signs of civil war have been dispersed. Second, the constitutional foundations of a law-based Russian state have been laid — a state that can secure its citizens' most important rights and freedoms. Third, the movement is underway toward the creation of a truly federal state structure, toward ensuring for the Russian Federation its rightful role in the international community. Fourth, the foundations of a market economy have been laid — an economy designed to ensure a standard of living for Russians and our country's economic might.

For the first time in Russia's history, large-scale transformations are taking place without the suppression and destruction of political opponents. The elections in December 1993 and the adoption of a democratic constitution laid the legal foundation for a new type of Russian state. In two years, a large number of vital laws on the economy and regulation of a civic society have been passed. The Treaty on Social Accord was signed. In June 1995, we managed to find a civilized outcome to a crisis between parliament and government. Despite mistakes, the government is in control of the economy and the formation and operation of market-economy mechanisms. Russia has on two occasions elected a full-time parliament.

At the same time, the transformations in Russia could have provided much more. We underestimated the depth of the crisis that we inherited. We began an undertaking that was entirely new to Russia, and at times committed errors. The fault, and more so the failure of the reformers was they were unable to conduct a proper dialogue with the public and explain what we were doing and why — why such a sharp turn was essential.

But I must say something else. A broad range of political forces, which above all are represented in the Federal Assembly, have an influence on decision-making at the state level. We have to constantly take account of the opposition in the country. I cannot say that this opposition has always acted constructively.

We have been asking people to tighten their belts for a long time now, and people have accepted this. But the limit of patience has been reached. We have come to the danger point when exhaustion and dissatisfaction can outweigh people's restraint and hope.

We need socially acceptable reform tactics. The task is to develop the market and lower the social cost of this process — to beat it down but not in such a way as to beat down the reforms themselves. The main point where we have failed is reliable protection for the social and economic rights of the individual. In implementing our social policy we are showing passivity, lagging behind the events, and often responding only to open manifestations of social discontent. The state's social obligations are being fulfilled extremely sloppily, with major failures and enormous tension.

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Whatever the difficulties the country has been going through, its citizens have acquired freedom. Russia has become an open state in deeds. The problem of exit and entry does not exist any more. The jamming stations and the strictest censorship of international information have been forgotten. Foreign policy has helped to bring our domestic legislation closer to the modern standards in the sphere of human rights. Today's Russia is not adhering to a single ideology. An ideological monopoly assisted by censorship has been replaced with the principle of pluralism. State coercion in the sphere of culture has been eliminated — many generations of Russians have dreamed about this.

Reunification of the two branches of our culture — the one which existed in Soviet conditions and the other which was abroad — has become a truly historic result of several years of freedom. Today Russian culture is united and its integral nature has been saved. The works that were banned or persecuted before have emerged from the underground, and the broadest public have access to them. After many decades the ban on the Bible, the Koran, and other holy books has been lifted. I am confident that now it is for good. Millions of innocent victims of political repressions have had their rights restored. The country enjoys full-scale freedom of political, public, and trade union activity; freedom of conscience, speech, the press, and information; and freedom of meetings, demonstrations, and rallies.

Whereas in 1991 the country was in the impasse of the crisis of its system, now it is going through the crisis of building a new market system, which has an enormous potential for development. We all know how difficult it was for Russia to go over to a new market system. Many people are still experiencing great difficulties in their lives. Quite a few Russian enterprises are in crisis and cannot cope with the situation.

There is something else, too, which should be noted: the lowering of inflation, the slowing down in price increases. Measures adopted recently to regulate the prices and tariffs charged for the services of natural monopolies — electricity, the gas industry, and railway transport — are producing results.

It is of fundamental importance that the lowering of inflation is being accompanied by the slowing down of the slump in production. Industrial production fell by 3 percent compared with 21 percent a year ago. In a number of sectors there has been a noticeable increase in output for the first time since 1990.

Russia now has over 950,000 small enterprises, and these account for about 12 percent of the country's gross domestic product. Directly or indirectly they provide jobs and wages for 25 million Russian citizens. They are a stable source of tax revenue for the federal and local budgets.

In June last year a law was passed on providing state support for small businesses. It provided a spur to their development. This is one further possibility helping to create a middle class in this country. The congress of representatives of Russia's small businesses has just ended its work. It put forward many constructive proposals to the Federal Assembly and the government. They should be implemented without delay.

Over the past year the economic development of the country has become more predictable. A major role in this has been played by the currency corridor. The Central Bank has accumulated greater currency reserves than the country has ever had before. 1995 saw the start of progress in other areas, too. There was particularly intensive development of the securities market.

In recent years success has been achieved in creating conditions for Russia to break into new international markets and maintain its positions in many traditional ones.

At the same time new problems have arisen. But these are a particular sort of problem. When a businessman has difficulty in adapting to low inflation, profitability, and the absence of the customary budget injections, then these difficulties are a result of the gradual normalization of the economic environment. That is, the very fact that these problems are arising is a sure sign that the economy is starting to improve.

What did 1995 bring us?

How have the goals set out in last year's presidential message been met?

The situation in the economy remains complex. Also, no start has been made on a strategic structural change of direction in favor of high-tech industries. The defense budget was once again unrealistic. The nonpayments crisis has not been overcome. There were long delays in adopting a program to promote exports. We are bad at collecting taxes and customs duties. A system for managing state property is still not complete.

We were unable to turn 1995 into a year of real agricultural reform. Not one of the goals in reforming the agricultural sector has been met. Yet the distribution of the priceless commodity of land was one of the main results of the reforms. Many townspeople took land; private farmers and rural residents received their plots of land. However, the initial euphoria at this acquisition quickly dissipated. Townspeople found out for themselves how much patience and labor one must spend on land. The way to one's allotment costs more

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by the day, construction materials are becoming more expensive.

The private farmer's problems multiply from day to day. His main worry is how to fend off the extortionist attentions and restrictions of local authorities. Collective farm members have clearly noticed that their farms are being plundered still more than in the past. So the revival of love for one's land and joy at the results of one's own labors are accompanied by growing irritation. Who is to blame for this? Reform? No — the lack of it.

The poor state of the agroindustrial complex continues to deteriorate and agriculture minister Nazarchuk has been dismissed. Most of our shortcomings are caused by poor executive discipline, the triumph of vested interests over those of the country. This applies to the Government of Russia itself and to the executive bodies in the members of the federation.

Yet the first and most difficult phase of the transitional period — liberalization of the economy — has been completed in full. The second phase — financial stabilization — is being completed. The third and final phase in creating a market economy is being started — promoting production and investment, efficiency gains, and a major restructuring of the Russian economy.

Victory once and for all over inflation is essential if we are to pull out of the crisis. It is possible and essential in 1996 to slow the rate of price rises to 25 percent a year. Then we will be able to expect a reduction in borrowing costs and the beginning of a massive influx of investment into production.

I must mention the role of the Federal Assembly in this. After long and difficult debates, your predecessors passed a budget that was as balanced as it could be under the circumstances. I count on you, esteemed members of parliament, to cooperate to good effect with the government in shaping budgets. This should help to suppress inflation and make it possible to enhance and guarantee the rights of the people of Russia to a dignified life. Another direction is an effective industrial policy designed to form the contemporary structures of the Russian economy, preserve and expand the country's capital resources, and strengthen Russia's position among the industrialized countries. We have a bloc of industries that even now produce competitive goods. These are mainly fuels, raw materials, and primary products. The existence of this bloc is an advantage to Russia, but for us it is more a means of survival than a long-term goal. Policy toward this sector should ensure self-financing, including in investment.

We have other industries that are capable of organizing the production of high-technology goods and making them competitive on the world market. In this area, we shall pursue a policy of direct state support, both political in the form of promoting our goods on the world market and also financial and economic.

It is absolutely vital to preserve the science, technology, and human resources of Russia's military-industrial complex; create an economic climate in which military and dual-purpose technologies can be developed; ensure increased output of the very latest types of defensive armaments; and expand our export potential.

The third group of industries is focused mainly on the domestic market. The goal here is to find a balance between Russian-made and imported products. We should make sure that our producers face competition on a scale that motivates them instead of crushing them.

The Russian Federation land code must be passed in 1996. It should allow landowners the right to dispose of their land. We must not be hasty, but a real upturn in the agricultural sector is clearly possible if state support for farming is accompanied by the establishment of private ownership of land.

If the rights of citizens to mortgage or lease land are ensured, then it is only on this basis that trade, processing, and credit structures of a market type will appear.

The policy of maintaining a stable exchange rate of the ruble and reducing the extent of dollarisation of the economy will continue. We will continue with our policy of reducing the yield from state securities. Placing the Russian Government's securities abroad will become a major area of Russian foreign economic ties. The measure is aimed at attracting resources to the budget and releasing a part of national capital for investments.

We have travelled a considerable part of the way toward a normal market economy. However, if people's social and economic rights are not ensured and we start to get political instability, everything could be lost and we shall be thrown back.

I am saying this primarily because the government, in seeking to achieve financial stabilization, has forgotten about people who have nothing to live on but their wages or their pensions. The government has not protected them. The government has virtually failed to carry out the tasks in the sphere of social policy set out in my two previous messages.

People are indignant at criminals going unpunished, at the arbitrary actions and corruption of officials. and at the authorities' powerless in the struggle against these loathsome phenomena.

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Economic activity in Russia is still fraught with considerable risks. No reliable protection has been ensured for the lives and property of citizens. Yes, we have managed to do quite a lot for ensuring the political rights and freedoms of citizens. But the situation is much worse with the guarantees for people's social and economic rights. One of the major goals of 1996 is to remove this shameful distortion and reinforce substantially the guarantees for the citizens' social and economic rights. I am striving to implement this goal and demand that all officials should do the same.

First of all, it is the issue of the government. Either it will manage to solve the tasks that have been put to it and protect the social and economic rights of people, or this will be done by a different government.

In my view, we Russians should be united today not by waiting for a better future but by the striving to solve the most difficult problems. The dreams of each of us should be implemented through joint efforts. So what tasks are we facing? In my view, there are three main ones. First, security and protection for the individual. Second, well-being, intellectual development, and hope for the family. Third, political stability and economic development for the fatherland.

Let us look at the first task. The state must protect citizens from the nonpayment of wages, pensions, and benefits. During my trip to Yekaterinburg, a third of all the questions for the president touched on these problems. We have reinforced control over budget spending. Instances of concealment of large sums and their circulation in commercial structures have become widespread phenomena. Working people, pensioners, invalids, and children are being robbed.

Here is just one example. According to government information, in Saratov region only 40 percent of funds from the budget allocated for teachers' salaries in the second half of 1995 were used for their intended purpose. The remainder was spent on other needs. This kind of thing is not only happening in Saratov. We know precisely who is involved and specific decisions will be taken in each case.

The decision was taken a few days ago to dismiss Aleksandr Smirnov, chief of the main administration of the Federal Treasury; Vyacheslav Polyakov, general director of the Federal Postal Service; Pavel Balakshin, head of administration of Archangel region; Yuriy Belikh, head of administration of Saratov region; Vladimir Golovachev, presidential representative in Saratov region; and a number of others. Yevgeniy Bychkov, head of the Committee for Precious Metals and Precious Stones, was released from his post. No one should intercede on behalf of these people — it will not help. I intend to act just as rigorously in the future. We can no longer tolerate such violations, which affect people's destinies and hamper the reforms. Those officials who do not pay budgetary funds out on time, who do not spend them as stipulated, who delay the payment of salaries and pensions, who engage in wide-scale bartering, and who are responsible for crude financial infringements will be punished severely, irrespective of the posts they hold.

It is planned to give partial compensation for citizens' savings in 1996. The government knows how to do this and has mechanisms that it has drawn up. I ask Viktor Stepanovich Chernomyrdin to present a draft edict on this in the next few days.

The protection of investors who have suffered as a result of the machinations of unscrupulous companies and banks should be the common responsibility of the state and society. A special state social public fund is being set up to compensate citizens for their losses. It is planned to use some of the income from privatization for this purpose. It is not just pensioners, the disabled, and families with many children who need social support. A significant proportion of the population that is capable of working are among the vulnerable today. Giving them jobs and decent wages represents the real protection of the social and economic rights of millions of people.

The fight against crime is still on the agenda — especially those aspects of crime that encroach upon the lives and health of citizens and upon their property; and those aspects of crime that undermine the economic foundations of the state and impede the development of honest entrepreneurial activity.

Among these are bribery and abuse of office among state officials, cases where staff of the law enforcement agencies directly committed treachery or compromised themselves. The weakness of the state for a long period affected the efficiency of the struggle against crime, the low efficiency.

Now I can say that in all of these areas the struggle has been sharply stepped up. In 1995 the procuracy began criminal proceedings in 1,200 cases of corruption, in various state bodies. The leaderships of the Russian Procuracy and Interior Ministry are actively clearing the law and order agencies of people who shame their title as law and order employees.

In 1995, 109 employees were fired from the procuracy under compromising circumstances. Some of them have been committed for trial. A total of 28,000 employees were fired from the Interior Ministry for various breaches of the law. Of these, 1,500 have been made criminally liable.

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We also have to rid ourselves of legal norms which create a favorable environment for bribery, for criminal extortion, for concealing taxes, and other economic crimes. Favorable conditions are created for these crimes by preservation of the principle of having to seek permission for the registration of business structures. It is small businesses which suffer most from this. I rejected the law on the state registration of legal persons precisely because it lacked the principle of needing only to provide information in order to be registered.

I demand from the government total revision of the legal provisions for regulating the economic sphere, and on the results of this revision it will be necessary to cancel or change the relevant normative acts. I ask the Federal Assembly to speed up the adoption of the Criminal and Criminal Procedure Codes. I turned down the criminal code for its excessively lenient articles on economic crimes. I count on further work being carried out on the codes with the active participation of the legal and law enforcement agencies.

It is a very important task to defeat street crime. One of the ways to resolve this is to set up a municipal militia. It should be subordinate to the bodies of local self-rule and, consequently, directly subordinate to the population. This requires time and resources but the problem must be tackled.

A few words about military reform. First of all, I do not share the opinion of some army leaders that the military reform is proceeding successfully. It is not. Can one speak of successes if the armed forces are receiving far too little attention from the state authorities, if at times their most elementary needs are not being provided for? No, military reform means first of all that the state must show increased attention to the army, in the people in uniform. It means equipping the armed forces with modern weapons and modern military equipment. In general, the unsystematic and inconsistent way in which the military reform is proceeding at present cannot be called real reform.

Our second task is the well-being, spiritual values, and the hopes of the family. The family is at the basis of our lives and our dispositions. The most important thing is that every family should have adequate housing. The solution of the housing problem should be the task of the state, especially in relation to those on a moderate income. A federal program entitled "A Home of One's Own" should be drawn up and implemented to ensure this. People should be given an opportunity to build their own homes with a 25-year loan. I also call on you, esteemed parliamentarians, to embark on the legislative implementation of this issue. The basis of every family is its responsibility toward its children. It is not easy to be a parent today but we should help our children to try to reach their full potential. The introduction of various forms of education is an important new development of recent years. The schools are now paying much more attention to children's individual temperaments, and there are fewer attempts to place all teachers and all students on a single level.

During these difficult years Russia has demonstrated that superb qualities exist among its scientific elite, among wide sections of the modest Russian intelligentsia, and among all those involved in treating and educating people. We see how the people of the CIS, our closest neighbors, and also how states of the world community are drawn to Russian science. But there are many problems. Under the crisis the states have been unable to immediately overcome the principle of financing culture from "the left-overs". Russia's intellectual potential, the physical and moral health of the nation — which means that of each family, too — are today left without sufficient support from the state.

The freedom to make profits in the sphere of culture and leisure led to the situation in which the worst examples of mass culture have begun to push out real art, destroying the moral basis to the bringing up of the young generation. True moral values are out of reach for many people on average and especially on low incomes. People are strangely shy of defending public morale and curbing the proliferation of violence, extremism, fascism, and so on. But the state has not and will not abandon the arts sphere. It will not allow it to be farmed out to market elements. Our common task is to ensure this.

The third task is: political stability and the economic development of our Motherland. Stability in the country is what every family and every citizen is dreaming about. Much will depend on the elections in June 1996. This is a period of maximum responsibility in our history. We should hold the elections with dignity and prevent any disruption. If we manage to maintain political stability, we will solve the tasks of the current, most recent stage of the transitional period. It will result in the country starting out on the path of stable economic development.

Calm and good order in the country depend on coordinated action by the president, the government, and parliament. At the beginning of my speech I was complimentary about the previous Federal Assembly. I was not just being polite. The Civil Code alone will earn it the electorate's gratitude. I know that the Federal Assembly has a very large portfolio of legislation before it. Many of these laws are extraordinarily important. But of the ten vital laws required under the constitution,

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only three have been passed. There are gaping loopholes in the regulation of economic activity, especially in relation to land. A tax code still has not been passed. The judicial system is still incomplete. But deputies focus their legislative attention by no means always on the most important laws. Unfortunately, poorly worded legal documents do appear and contravene the constitution and existing legislation. In breach of the constitution, laws are often passed that interfere with the budget without the government's opinion having been sought. I have had to throw out laws recently because of gross procedural violations.

All of this makes me use the presidential veto as an instrument of legal supervision. Hastiness in passing laws often means that legislation lacks a mechanism for its own implementation and penalties for failure to comply with it. If the legislative priorities set out in my previous messages are not observed, if the legislative process is not put in order, then I believe that the president should issue edicts on the key issues that are not governed by existing legislation.

These edicts will of course comply with the constitution, and their effect will expire as the appropriate laws are passed.

It will take many years to lay the legal foundation for a new type of Russian state, and short-term political gains should not be a factor in this process. I expect members of parliament to share this opinion.

Russia as a federation has faced other no less difficult problems recently. Just five years ago, the Russian and international press were full of predictions of inevitable catastrophe for our country. Headlines often predicted imminent disintegration (of the federation). Today, I can say with confidence that they were wrong. When the Russian Constitution was adopted in 1993, the country's federal structure acquired a strict legislative framework. A single economy throughout the country is gradually being restored, on a fundamentally new basis. For the first time in decades, it has become truly an economy and not merely distribution by administration. Budget federalism is gaining ground.

At the same time, there are many problems in the development of federal relations. The Russian Government is dragging its heels over drawing up a concept for national and regional policy. The lack of such important state documents causes wrong decisions to be made, can reduce the national identity of many peoples, and increases tension in several regions.

The Constitution makes it incumbent on the Federal Assembly to adopt laws to regulate relations between the federal center and the components of the federation. The overwhelming majority of these have not yet been adopted. This makes it possible for many cases to arise in which the constitutions of Russian republics and the statutes of territories and regions do not accord with the Constitution of the Russian Federation and with federal laws.

I shall say something about a different matter. Party control has collapsed but the new law-based system has not yet begun working at full power, and not infrequently officials in Moscow and in the regions, the directors of state enterprises and many others abuse the freedom which democracy has bestowed. And they often do not carry any responsibility for this.

How many supervisory bodies Russia has! Several hundred thousand people work in them. But little good comes of it. How much effort is needed to get specific results from them! What is this, mutual back-scratching? One cannot put up with this any longer. The Constitution makes it incumbent on me to ensure the coordinated operation and cooperation of the bodies of state power. Therefore, I consider it essential to put into operation in 1996 a mechanism to coordinate the work of the federal supervising bodies.

Esteemed members of the Federation Council, esteemed deputies of the State Duma, the situation in Chechnya remains possibly society's greatest pain. We cannot remain indifferent to the fact that Russian citizens are being killed there, no matter what ethnic group they belong to.

Last year's message gave a detailed picture of the situation. Since then several major events have taken place which cast new light on the nature of the problem. First of all, there was the decision of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation which recognized as correct the decision of the Russian President on restoring constitutional order in the Chechen Republic.

Second, the federal governmental delegation signed an agreement on the package of military questions with both sides in the Chechen conflict.

Third, on 17 December last year the head of the Chechen Republic and the deputies to the State Duma from Chechnya were elected. In this way, the inhabitants in the republic let it be clearly understood that they want peace. They want to have a normal life. Clearly, the restoration of normal life in Chechnya does not leave the Dudayevites any chances. Therefore, their leadership trampled on the accords reached in the summer and tried to put the situation back on the military track. However, as they lack the strength for large-scale armed confrontation, the Dudayevites chose the tactic of blatant terrorism.

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The majority of the republic's population is justifiably afraid that tomorrow the federal forces could leave the republic at once. At the same time, people are afraid to protest openly against the lawlessness of the fighters. That is why I have to repeat once again: The force of state coercion was and is aimed against the bandits who have amassed enormous stocks of weapons. The federal forces are helping the republic's legitimate authorities to ensure normal life and security for its population. We are ready to hold talks with any political forces keen on establishing peace in Chechnya, but we have no intention to conclude a deal with bandits, especially not behind the back of Chechnya's legitimate government. We are prepared to find compromises on the issue of chechnya's status within Russia but not to the detriment of the security of its citizens."

The government and the public commission which were set up by edict presented to me today some generalized proposals which have been received from citizens, the public, state bodies, and officials. A decision on a peaceful settlement of the Chechen problem will be made on the basis of these. But I can already tell you that we do not plan to do it in one single step. There will be a series of consistent measures. This will include talks, the completion of organizing legitimate authorities in the republic, placing more responsibility with them for the state of affairs in the republic, and bringing order to the use of funds for the republic.

Russia has had to pursue its foreign policy and establish itself in a new international role in exceptionally difficult circumstances. By no means everything has proceeded smoothly. Foreign policy priorities took a long time to be defined, and there have been delays and discrepancies between courses as proclaimed and as implemented. All of this had to be corrected and adjusted. Russia still has many foreign policy problems.

The possibility of geopolitical changes that would be unfortunate for us has not gone away. They are primarily connected with the possibility of NATO expanding eastward.

We are concerned about attempts to oppose Russian interests within the Commonwealth of Independent States, during the process of settlement in Yugoslavia, and over issues connected with the balance of conventional forces in Europe, and the continued validity of the Antiballistic Missile treaty. The threat of local conflict on Russia's borders is still there.

However, the abundance and acuteness of foreign policy difficulties must not obscure the achievements. Deeper integration among CIS states has now safely overcome the trend toward dispersal. Documents have been already completed for three states: Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. And integration is taking place with full respect for sovereignty and the principles of voluntary and mutual gain. We have begun to actively uphold and support our compatriots abroad, although much has still to be done in this respect.

For the first time in the 20th Century, Russia faces no real military threat. Mighty nuclear weapons are no longer targetted on Russian towns and cities. Russia is taking its rightful place in world politics with growing confidence. Meetings of the world's seven leading countries are gradually becoming meetings of the eight, with the full and equal involvement of our state. Russia has obtained entry to the oldest of all European organizations, the Council of Europe. We have concluded agreements on cooperation and partnership with the European Union that are unparalleled in their scope and depth. Russia has become an active member of many international financial and trade and economic organizations.

Russia and the United States are making reductions in strategic weapons which are of an uprecedented depth. An unlimited and unconditional extension of the treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons has been brought about, thanks to our active position. It is now a matter of ratifying the START-II treaty. Two super powers, Russia and China, have prepared a unique treaty on measures of trust and military relaxation along the border. We have succeeded in creating the political and legal conditions necessary for our economy to enter new markets and to preserve our position on our traditional markets. We have established good political relations with the fast developing countries of the ASEAN and the Persian Gulf and we have for the first time entered their markets, including the promising arms market. I am sure that, having learned the lessons of the past few years, we will have every opportunity to conduct more realistic, multifaceted, and pragmatic foreign policies — policies which will more actively support the country's national interests.

Esteemed members of the Federation Council and deputies of the State Duma, we are all on the eve of a serious examination. It is important to understand that freedom and democracy are not something that someone has dreamed up, they are not a national feature of some particular people, and they are not the political aim of some particular party. They are the only possibility for ensuring a worthy life, they are the main conditions for progress and prosperity.

On the basis of Russian and world experience, having made my own choice, I confirm that only a democratic state structure can ensure a worthy future for Russia.

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No matter who comes to power in the coming presidential elections, he should remember that it is the destiny of the country's leader to strengthen freedom and democracy in Russia. It is the task of all state authority, each of its representatives, including each deputy, to act in such a way as to make this path less painful for society.

Herein lies the highest responsibility of the state and the duty before the future generations of Russians. We shall bear in mind that this is possibly our last chance to break out of the vicious circle and to make irreversible Russia's progress toward democracy and toward a normal prosperous life.

I believe in Russia's capability to implement the ideals of freedom and democracy. I believe in the people of Russia. I believe in the generation to which I belong. I believe in our young people who are free and talented, who will not allow the country to be turned back and who are capable of moving it forward. May the future generations receive as their inheritance the achievements of our hands. Only then shall we fulfill our destiny. Only then shall we be worthy of the historic responsibility which has been laid on our shoulders.

Thank you for your attention. [Applause]

Russia: Zyuganov Criticizes Yeltsin's 'Populist' Address

LD2302155496 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1536 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Pavel Kuznetsov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, February 23 (ITAR-TASS) — "The Russian President's message to the Federal Assembly was a mere formality," believes Gennadiy Zyuganov, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. He said this at a news conference in the State Duma on Friday.

Zyuganov said the message "did not contain an honest, critical assessment of what is taking place in the country." Communists have not been expecting anything from such functions for a long time, Zyuganov said.

He said that, on the whole, the Presidential message is "populist and lacks logic." The third part of the message was "copied from the documents of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation of two years ago," Zyuganov said. He believes the message is aimed at creating the impression that "everyone but the President is to blame for what is happening in the country." Zyuganov said the Presidential message did not contain "any recipes for overcoming the country's present complex and tragic situation." Therefore, he arrived at the conclusion that such messages are hardly effective at all.

The leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation also commented on the agreement on the granting of IMF credits to Russia, reached on Thursday. He said the Communists will support such an agreement only if the funds received "are spent on the development of technologies of the future, on science, education and health services." Meanwhile Communists are strongly against such agreements if the funds will be spend on war and corrupt criminals. "In any case, it will be our children and grandchildren who will have to repay the debt," Zyuganov said.

Deputy chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist party of the Russian Federation, Aleksandr Shabanov, said at the news conference that the Communists referred to the Central Electoral Commission on Friday 1,715 thousand voters' signatures from 63 subjects of the Federation in support of Gennadiy Zyuganov as Presidential candidate. Lists with 3,100 thousand signatures in Zyuganov's support have already been collected in Moscow, Shabanov said.

Altogether 4,200 signatures in support of the Communist leader have been collected all over the country, according to the information of the Communist Party, Shabanov said.

Russia: Yeltsin's Address Was 'Nothing Radically New'

MK2402143096 Moscow KOMMERSANT-DAILY in Russian 24 Feb 96 pp 1,3

[Commentary by Veronika Kutsyllo: "Boris Yeltsin: It's Time To Start Feeling at Home in Russia"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The president's [state of the nation] address could not but have differed at least in style from the two previous ones — it was written bearing in mind the impending presidential election in the country. Reading out the address, the president, however, proved unable to break with tradition — strange as it is, it sounded more insipid than the written text. This despite the fact that, as the men in the Kremlin were saying the day before, the contrary was contemplated — the speech was supposed to carry "more emotion" than the [written] message. Commentary by Veronika Kutsyllo.

There was nothing radically new to the Russian ear either in the address itself or in the way the president presented it. That is easy to explain — the message took a long time to write. His aides claim the president was "wrapped up in it" and on occasion quoted from the text long before 23 February. Thus, nothing came

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as a bombshell yesterday: neither the promises of compensation for all and everything, nor the thunder aimed at corrupt officials who invest money for profit instead of paying workers their wages, nor the refusal "to conduct talks with Chechen bandits behind the backs of the legitimate government of Chechnya."

The impression is that, recalling the president's recent "Chechen" ad libs, which drew an inappropriate (from the Kremlin's point of view) reaction from the press and society, his comrades in arms counseled Boris Yeltsin against even minimal deviations from the text of the speech. With some reservations, one can accept as emotional and strong only phrases such as "if the government proves unable to defend the social and economic rights of citizens, this will be done by another government," or "let no one defend these people — this is not going to help" (he was speaking of the men dismissed the day before yesterday). Incidentally, after this phrase a faint din of voices echoed through the Kremlin's Marble Hall: Federation Council members, who think their two colleagues — Pavel Balakshin and Yuriy Smirnykh — were fired for no good reason, did not like it at all.

It is not ruled out, however, that any "extreme" utterances had been deliberately weeded out from the president's speech so that Yeltsin would appear in the eyes of the citizens as a calm and levelheaded head of state. It is still strange that the president should have skipped in his speech (which was heard by people who will never read the president's address itself) the advantageous passages of the written text. What is more, feeling self-conscious perhaps, Boris Yeltsin did not even give in his speech the title of the message — "The Russia for Which We Are Responsible." [passage omitted]

Russia: Yeltsin Address Seen Skewing Russia's CIS, World Status

MK2402102196 Moscow SEGODNYA in Russian 24 Feb 96 p 1

[Report by Vladimir Abarinov: "NATO Intrigue Mars Rosy Picture of the World. President Is Unable To Part With His Pet Scarecrow"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The presidential address [to parliament] devoted less than two pages to foreign policy, mainly describing Russia's success stories in the international arena. The list is impressive. Indeed, "armed internecine strife" with nuclear weapons could have set in after the breakup of the USSR, but this did not happen. The voter is reminded of radio jamming and censorship and the exit-entry problem. The president is right: All these delights of "developed socialism" not only may, but will necessarily come back to us with the advent of Communists in power. One could agree with the statement that Russia's global role has consolidated. The author can visualize the caustic remarks from the pseudo-patriotic opposition camp to the effect that the country's authority has catastrophically fallen; it is not being reckoned with; it has again been cheated: What kind of strengthened role are you talking about then? All this is vulgar propaganda for fools and scoundrels. The Soviet Union was put up with as a necessary evil; it was hated even by its allies; it was fully excluded from world processes. Russia, even though painfully and haltingly, is being integrated into international institutions, interacting with the great powers on the basis of goodwill, not hopeless confrontation.

Unfortunately, next the text shows that the Kremlin does not have quite an adequate perception of the events and processes of international politics. Often the president indulges in wishful thinking. There is no call to indulge in self-congratulation over transient advantages: We have not really entered any new markets; neither ASEAN nor Persian Gulf countries see Russia as a serious partner. You, Mr. President, have been misled by unscrupulous officials who are no good at any other genre than the victorious report and political denunciation. The "trend toward a substantial deepening of integration among CIS member states" is also an obvious bluff. This trend, in our impartial opinion, is of a purely parasitic character. In those cases where integration does not promise a Moscow partner instant economic or political dividends, it does not show the slightest trend [toward integration].

Finally, the presidential team's perception of the West and its aims and capabilities bear the unmistakable imprint of idiosyncrasy. There is no energy to resume the fruitless discussion about the mythical military threat from NATO. The Russian Everyman sees as much more real the threat coming from his own, Russian army: There have been plenty of examples to that effect. It is perfectly evident that politicians are using the scarecrow of the external threat for purely speculative aims. In so doing, they are very well aware that only in relations with the West can Russia count on honest partnership. The president has had quite a few opportunities to see this, and nonetheless he continues to blow the battle horn which even he himself finds nauseating.

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Russia: Anticorruption Campaign Could 'Consolidate Ruling Elite'

MK2402133996 Moscow SEGODNYA in Russian 24 Feb 96 p 1

[Report by Dmitriy Volkov: "Return Address: Russia, the Kremlin, for Boris Yeltsin"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted]

In his statement the president mentioned the responsibility of the Communist regime, which created the objective prerequisites for the current crisis. But Mr. Yeltsin did not emphasize this in his speech. In all likelihood, anti-Communist propaganda will become an important element of his election campaign later, on the basis of a fairly detailed theoretical underpinning, which is contained in the text of his message and is supported by secret documents from party archives into the bargain. But for the time being it is evidently too early for the president to engage in open polemics with the Communist Party of the Russian Federation [CPRF]. Yet it is high time to take on corruption.

Here are a few typical quotations from the president's speech: "The causes of most of our drawbacks are inadequate executive discipline and the precedence of group interests over the interests of the country." "People are indignant at the impunity of criminals, the arbitrariness and corruption of bureaucrats, and the authorities' impotence in the struggle with this disgusting phenomenon." "Incidents of concealing large sums (from the budget) and floating them around in commercial structures have become commonplace." And — after listing already fired officials — "Let no one even try to put in a word for them. This will not help."

It seems that the president needs this stern tone and decisive actions in order to frighten the daylights out of Russian bureaucrats. In addition, such a stance in general ought to be inherently characteristic of a ruling head of state — indeed, what else should he do once he is told about misappropriations? True, the revelations should be carefully spread over time so that exposed bureaucrats will last for the entire campaign without ruining the bureaucratic system.

Ironically, the anticorruption campaign could consolidate the ruling elite. The message contains an important clarification: It is not just "group," but also "corporate" interests that act "to the detriment of the interests of the country." The incumbent president is entitled to define national interests on his own; therefore, it is he who weighs on his scale whose "corporate interests" run counter to the national ones and whose do not. Hence, it should be absolutely clear to the "antinational corporations" that they must surrender to the "corporations" approved by the president, otherwise the mechanism of political bankruptcy will be set in motion. Incidentally, a "monopoly" thus formed might well be less petty and more efficient than the highly competitive environment that currently exists in the government and, admittedly, in the presidential staff.

If Boris Yeltsin succeeds, the plight of small businesses, too, may be alleviated. The act of formalizing by law a simplified procedure for registering enterprises, which has been proposed by the head of state, and which deprives bureaucracy of a considerable source of income and influence, may prove insufficient. Russian bureaucracy has repeatedly demonstrated its proficiency for sabotage. It seems that only a monopoly on authority can neutralize it. Furthermore, it is not so important how clean the executive director of such a monopoly will be if this office is reserved for him for another four years.

It is later that the president will appeal directly to voters — after he has embarked on putting his threats and promises into effect. Evidently his appeal will be addressed not so much to the "modest Russian intelligentsia" or entrepreneurs writhing under bureaucrats' scrutinizing attention as to the population of the Russian provinces, dreaming of state tutelage and the absolute clarity of life. At the moment Boris Yeltsin must earn the right to appeal to this audience, which has currently come to dominate Russia. And while he is busy doing so, his electoral headquarters will send voters reports about work done with the return address: Russia, the Kremlin, for Boris Yeltsin.

Russia: Poll Shows 40 Percent Oppose Yeltsin Reelection

LD2502151696 Moscow Radio Rossii Network in Russian 0900 GMT 25 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The All-Russia Center for Public Opinion Research has conducted another opinion poll among 1,600 Russians. This time questions were presented in a pattern which simulates two-stage elections.

The first question was as follows: Which politician would you like to become the president of Russia? The respondents could tick several surnames from a list which contained nine most prominent politicians. The four names were chosen most frequently were Gennadiy Zyuganov, Grigoriy Yavlinskiy, Aleksandr Lebed, and Svyatoslav Fedorov; 16-18 percent of the respondents chose them.

Another question asked the respondents whom they did not want to see as president. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy heads the list, with 42 percent of the respondents being

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against his candidacy; 40 percent do not want to see Boris Yeltsin in this post; Mikhail Gorbachev and Yegor Gaydar follow him on this list.

If we compare votes for and against these politicians, then Svyatoslav Fedorov and Grigoriy Yavlinskiy will have the most striking balance, with Mikhail Gorbachev and Yegor Gaydar in the wake.

Some questions simulated situations at the second stage of the election, when the electorate will choose one of the two candidates who had scored the biggest number of votes at the first stage. The poll shows the following picture. Zyuganov is winning in the Yeltsin-Zyuganov contest; he also came across better than Zhirinovskiy but may lose to Yavlinskiy. However, in this last case the number of those who were not sure of what to answer was quite large.

Russia: CPRF Outlines Terms for Election Alliance

MM2302152696 Moscow PRAVDA ROSSII in Russian 23 Feb 96 p 1

["Declaration on the Fundamentals of Cooperation Among Russia's Popular-Patriotic Forces During the Preparations for and the Holding of the Russian Federation Presidential Election," adopted on 15 February at the Fourth All-Russia Conference of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation" in Moscow]

[FBIS Translated Text] The results of the State Duma elections were visible evidence of the rejection by the majority of the Russian population of the ruling regime and its political immorality and irresponsibility, which inevitably come into profound conflict with the fundamental interests of the individual, society, and the state. Russian Federation President B. Yeltsin is mainly responsible for the anti-people policy and is its personification. It was to him that the voters said a firm and decisive "No!" in the elections.

The time has come for all honest people in Russia, for the Fatherland's sincere patriots to join forces and politically defeat the current anti-people regime. Only a victory by the single candidate of the popular-patriotic forces in the Russian Federation presidential election will create the necessary conditions for bringing the country out of the severe crisis onto a normal, steady path of development ensuring a flourishing state, responsible and predictable domestic and foreign policy, well-being for citizens, observance of their constitutional rights and freedoms, and peace and accord in society.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation [CPRF],

moved by a sense of respect for the best traditions of our great Homeland — people's power, collectivism, patriotism, and national cohesion in the face of an advancing threat,

and conscious of its responsibility for the country's future at the present crucial stage in its historical existence,

appeals to all whose consciences cannot tolerate the people's poverty and sufferings, who cherish the ideas of duty, honesty, justice, and human decency, and who can lay aside petty political aims and personal ambitions in favor of the supreme ideals of serving the Fatherland:

Let Us Unite in Our Common Desire for a People's Victory on 16 June 1996!

We appeal to parties, movements, public organizations, political leaders, and all who accept the declaration's principles, proposing that they pool their organizational, material, and propaganda potential and mobilize the maximum number of Russian voters in support of a single candidate for the popular-patriotic forces, namely Gennadiy Andreyevich Zyuganov, chairman of the CPRF Central Committee.

In order to prepare urgent measures to get the country out of the crisis and ensure their practical implementation after the election, we propose the formation of an authoritative team of professionals from among representatives of political forces forming a popular-patriotic bloc in support of the single candidate. This will supply the nucleus of a future government of people's confidence, answerable to the voters and the supreme organs of legislative authority.

In offering this declaration for general discussion, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation is taking an important new step on the path of creating a broad coalition of popular-patriotic forces in Russia.

There is no time to lose. The presidential election campaign has already begun. All who are prepared to unite with the CPRF can record their agreement with this declaration. The final decision on support for the single candidate for the post of Russian Federation president and his election program is to be made at the beginning of March 1996 at a conference of political leaders representing Russian popular-patriotic forces.

Russia: Zhirinovskiy: Yeltsin Must Take 'Tougher Position'

LD2302212196 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1701 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Feb 23 (INTERFAX) — Leader of the Russian Liberal Democratic

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Party [LDPR] and its State Duma faction Vladimir Zhirinovskiy believes that Russian President Boris Yeltsin is his major contender at the upcoming presidential elections.

Speaking about the policy pursued by the president at a press conference in Moscow Friday [23 February], Zhirinovskiy said that Yeltsin "must take a tougher position." He believes "it is necessary to dismiss almost 90 percent of ministers and 90 percent of governors guilty of corruption and total violation of laws."

"It is possible to end the war in Chechnya within three days by destroying bands and disarming by force those who do not want to surrender arms," Zhirinovskiy said.

"The president shows weakness, he is too kind, too compliant, too manageable."

The liberal democratic party, as an opposition party, "criticizes the president for his lack of resoluteness and delays in adopting those measures which the LDPR proposed long ago." In his address to the Federal Assembly Yeltsin "has borrowed a lot from the opposition," Zhirinovskiy said.

After people have learned the truth about events ongoing in the country for more than 70 years of "the CPSU regime (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), communists will not win," Zhirinovskiy believes.

The LDPR believes the strength of the Russian Armed forces must be 3.5 million people, state security bodies 1 million people, and Interior Forces 1 million people.

Zhirinovskiy disagrees with those who assert that "Russia has no adversaries," saying "Russia always has an adversary, today these are the United States, NATO, China, and Turkey."

Russia: Soskovets Notes Yeltsin's Invitation To Head Campaign

LD2302185096 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1350 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Feb 23 (INTERFAX) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin has asked First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets to head his election campaign, Soskovets said at a meeting in Moscow on Friday with the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Michel Camdessus.

The provisions of the president's address, which he made to the deputies of the Federal Assembly in the Kremlin on Friday, will form the basis of Yeltsin's election platform, Soskovets said.

Soskovets also said that he is to meet the president on Friday.

Yeltsin's election campaign will take place in a very difficult atmosphere, he said. "The Communist faction has received many seats in the State Duma by relying on tough criticism of the government," said Soskovets.

He said, however, that the Communists "are unmasking themselves" by publishing their intentions in the sphere of economic policy in the news media.

Camdessus wished every success to Yeltsin in his election campaign.

"People who come to the ballot box cannot be bribed by eloquent promises," he said. "Those whose strategy was tough during the reforms usually win," said Camdessus.

Russia: Camdessus Backs Yeltsin; Soskovets Views IMF 'Deal'

LD2302201096 Moscow NTV in Russian 1600 GMT 23 Feb 96

[From the "Segodnya" newscast]

[FBIS Translated Text] It was announced today that First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets will head Boris Yeltsin's election campaign. Soskovets stated this himself at a meeting with IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus, who, for his part, did not fail to note Yeltsin's address in parliament today. Vadim Glusker has the details.

[Glusker] After Michel Camdessus had had talks with Boris Yeltsin and Viktor Chernomyrdin, and had decided to allocate Russia $10 billion worth of credits, to the surprise of many he unexpectedly asked for an audience with First Deputy Prime Minister Soskovets. Explaining his wish, Michel Camdessus declared that in his view, Oleg Soskovets is one of the few guarantors that the reforms will continue in Russia. Now that they will have a pronounced social orientation, Michel Camdessus is insisting that part of the credit allocated is directed to paying arrears in wages and to paying out pensions.

Although Michel Camdessus pointed out that the IMF does not finance any specific political party, he admitted that the policy being conducted by President Yeltsin is the only correct one in today's conditions in Russia. As for Yeltsin himself running in the presidential elections, Michel Camdessus announced today that he is extremely pleased that his Moscow visit coincided with the president's annual address to the Federal Assembly. In Camdessus' opinion, Yeltsin determines not only the strategy, but also the tactics of the economic transformations in Russia. In this connection, he cited an interesting statistic: according to Camdessus, in the last 10 years that he has been head of the IMF, his fund

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has signed credit agreements with various countries, precisely in the run-up to elections, and it has always been the candidate who supported signing the agreement with the IMF who has won. This was the case with both Margaret Thatcher and Francois Mitterrand in 1988. Michel Camdessus was thus predicting a victory for Boris Yeltsin in the June elections.

Given that Oleg Soskovets is to head President Yeltsin's election campaign, Michel Camdessus thus offered him a unique deal: he would like to act in the role of Boris Yeltsin's agent in the West; while Oleg Soskovets, for his part, should publicize the expediency of granting the credit during the election campaign.

We do not yet know whether Oleg Soskovets accepted these terms. But he nevertheless said this to journalists today:

[Begin Soskovets recording] In the political situation in which Russia finds itself today, the signing of the agreement between the Russian Government and the IMF is extremely important for the presidential election campaign itself, and, of course, in creating trust in the government, trust in the policy of reforms in Russia today. [end recording]

[Glusker] In addition, Oleg Soskovets promised that when he met President Yeltsin in the Kremlin today, he would tell the president personally of Michel Camdessus' initiative. [video shows Soskovets and Camdessus in talks, meeting press]

Russia: Former Acting Prosecutor General Indicted on Two Counts

LD2302184496 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1350 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Feb 23 (INTERFAX) — Russia's former acting prosecutor general Aleksey Ilyushenko has been charged with taking bribes, punishable by clause 173 of the penal code, and with power and office abuses, punishable by clause 170 of the code, a spokesman for the Russian Prosecutor General's Office has said.

The department opened a criminal case against Ilyushenko on February 13, the spokesman added. Since February 15, when Ilyushenko was arrested following his interrogation as a witness to the case of the Balkar Trading company and its boss Petr Yanchev, he has been confined to the Federal Security Service (FSB) cell in the Lefortovo jail, the source said.

Balkar Trading, based at Balashikha, a small town near Moscow, assisted by Mobile Oil of the United States was engaged in Russian oil export. Legal proceedings against it were started by the FSB branch in Kamchatka, Russia's Far East, on February 16, 1995. Subsequently, the case has been investigated by the FSB Moscow region's department.

The Prosecutor General's Office has combined charges against Ilyushenko and Yanchev in a single case and has begun investigation on it. It has done so because by the law "On the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation," it is the sole body empowered to investigate the wrong-doings of any of its officers, even those who have resigned or retired.

Appointed acting prosecutor general on February 26, 1994, Ilyushenko was first dismissed from office last October and was then pensioned off.

At yesterday's meeting with President Yeltsin, the current Russian Prosecutor General Yuriy Skuratov told the head of state about criminal proceedings against Ilyushenko.

Military Issues

Russia: Yeltsin Honors Soldiers; Presents Medal to Grachev

LD2302150696 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1350 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Feb 23 (INTERFAX) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin has said that he will give much attention to the problems of the armed forces and take action on them.

"The state and society will support Russian servicemen not only with their words of gratitude," Yeltsin told participants in an awards ceremony Friday.

The ceremony was held on the occasion of the Motherland Defender Day to grant supreme Russian orders to Admiral Feliks Gromov, Army General Konstantin Kobets, General Petr Deynekin and other servicemen.

"Much attention will be given to the topical problems of the armed forces, including the timely budget financing for military building and the solution of social problems of servicemen and their families," said the president.

He promised timely payments to the servicemen. "Tough measures have been taken, and the government has been instructed to fully settle the problem once and for all. Otherwise, punishment will be severe," said Yeltsin.

He hopes for a decision as soon as possible on a way to settle the Chechen conflict in the interests of the Chechen people and the whole of Russia. Yeltsin has received two variants of possible Chechen settlement plans from two commissions, which will be considered in the immediate future.

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Today the president granted a gold memorial medal to Defense Minister Pavel Grachev. One side of the medal depicts the Russian President, while the other shows the Russian state emblem. The medal carries an inscription, "From the President of the Russian Federation." Yeltsin said this is the second medal, the first one having been awarded to German Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Russia: Grachev Interviewed on Army Reform, Chechnya

MK2302123696 Moscow MOSKOVSKIY KOMSOMOLETS in Russian 23 Feb 96 p 2

[Interview with Defense Minister Pavel Grachev by Aleksandr Kolpakov; place and date not given: "A Minister's Defense"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Today is the Day of the Defenders of the Fatherland. The army will mark this day in many different ways: Some in Chechnya, others in Tajikistan, Abkhazia, or Bosnia; still others remain on alert status or on duty. But there are also bound to be those who would go AWOL on this day or would prefer to have a good sleep after a brief, but fierce battle to wipe out macaroni with minced meat. Well, may honor and praise be on them! But let us hear how the Russian army fares and puts up a defense during this difficult "transition" period. Today we talk with Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev.

[Kolpakov] Pavel Sergeyevich, do you think it is difficult to be defense minister?

[Grachev] To say "difficult" is to say nothing — it is immensely difficult! Had I been brought back to what existed four years ago and told: "Grachev, you must cover this distance." I would have refused.

[Kolpakov] Why do you think Yeltsin has not given up on Grachev yet? Rumors are circulating that you allegedly hold some evidence implicating the president in something terrible.

[Grachev] God forbid. I hold no evidence against anyone. This is not my line. Generally speaking, I think that this is extremely indecent and incompatible with an officer's honor. Besides, I remembered for my whole life the words of my father, who fought in the war, and who was a real man: "Come what may, never exploit other people's weaknesses. Be responsible for everything yourself."

Now about your question: "Why has he not given up?" That is, as far as I can understand, talk about my resignation. Now listen, if the president thinks it necessary, I will accept it as something that must be done. I will not shoot myself. But as long as Boris Nikolayevich trusts me to hold the post of defense minister, this means he thinks that Grachev is in the right place.

[Kolpakov] In his recent statements the president expressed his displeasure with the way reform proceeds in the army. Given that, after the "shooting" of the president's old guard, you are the last one left from it, don't you have a premonition of the inevitable?

[Grachev] When Boris Nikolayevich talks about his dissatisfaction with the course of reform, this does not mean that the Defense Ministry and the General Staff are sitting on their hands. Yet these reproaches by the president are justified. Reform becomes stalled not just in the army. And let us not forget that the perfection of the army is a matter for the whole state to attend to.

[Kolpakov] Generally speaking, it is indeed not the army's business to look for funds, to exert pressure on the budget, the army has quite different functions.

[Grachev] You are absolutely right, and yet I agree with the president who responded to yet another request for money on my part as follows: "Pavel Sergeyevich, there is a part of reform that can be conducted without money. This is difficult, but try anyway." And I do.

[Kolpakov] Pavel Sergeyevich, what are the current "electoral" sentiments in the army, on whom are the privates and officers currently betting — the one who promises more? The army is loitering without money; officers' paychecks are delayed. And here we are. A person pops up who promises to give everyone clothes, food, and to pour coins into everyone's pocket into the bargain...

[Grachev] But where will he find it all? One can promise anything. This is what is called populism: presents to all and now. Clearly, such tricks are only a means in the political struggle.

As for me, I myself am not going to convince anyone; I am proceeding from one principle: don't rock the boat. Meanwhile, there are various sentiments in the army. But one thing is certain: everyone wants certainty about tomorrow and stability! And no hot spots.

[Kolpakov] The saga of reorganizing the Airborne Assault Troops [VDV] has caused much speculation, I would like to hear a view on the matter firsthand.

[Grachev] It would be absurd to think that the defense minister, who had formerly been a paratrooper himself, is longing to break up the VDV!

I have repeatedly made comments on the situation over the VDV and say once again: These troops, being elite and forward-based, will be developed by all possible means. They will have new models of military hardware

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in service, including self-propelled artillery, new air-defense weapons, new anti-tank weapons and armor equipment. The VDV will be able to fulfill operational-tactical missions independently and to carry out combat operations without having to be reinforced by other armed services. The bulk of the VDV will be made up of five airborne assault divisions and four airborne assault brigades. Because of their remoteness and the difficulties arising from sending orders to them from Moscow, another four brigades will be placed under the direct command of district troop commanders.

[Kolpakov] From the VDV to Chechnya. Personally, I was strongly hoping that in Pervomayskoye our power agencies would take account of all the mistakes of the Chechnya war. And there you go again — such a lapse...

[Grachev] This was a special operation that was carried out there. The army command was not involved in it. Nor are we meant for fighting terrorists. But since there were very many bandits, the operation commanders requested several army units for support to seal off Pervomayskoye on the outer perimeter. In order to break through the encirclement the bandits had to force their way through several blocking-points of the internal perimeter. So they did and reached the last blocking-point which was held by our special-purpose group that numbered 35 men. An unequal combat ensued. Six of my men were killed in that combat, including the army reconnaissance chief, the rest received injuries varying in gravity. But none of the bandits broke through in that sector. So one should not denounce the army in this particular case. I am thankful to IZVESTIYA journalist Valeriy Yakov, who had been there himself and later published what was essentially a scheme of the combat and recounted what in fact had happened there. [passage omitted]

Russia: Communists Stage Rally in Moscow for Army Day

LD2302201796 Moscow Radiostantsiya Ekho Moskvy in Russian 1600 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Day of the Defender of Fatherland is celebrated in Russia today. Right now a rally is taking place in the capital on Teatralnaya Square devoted to this day. Our correspondent Dmitriy Khitarov went to the scene.

[Begin Khitarov recording] An hour before the meeting of the communist forces, numerous police and medical personnel sealed off the square. Interior troops from the Dzerzhinskiy Division were deployed in the blind alleys around the Kremlin and along the route of the rally. The most devout Leninists had begun to flock together by that time. Red flags and songs of the Soviet era were the most familiar entourage for such events. Even pony horses in the square in front of McDonalds were wearing red horse-cloths. At 1645 there were so many participants in the meeting that there was not enough room for them on the pavements around Pushkinskaya Square and the police had to stop the traffic ahead of time.

Gennadiy Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, had arrived by that time. He led the column toward the Teatralnaya Square. In addition to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the Russian Communist Party, the Union of Officers, and Working Russia took part in the rally and the meeting. Zyuganov's speech certainly did sound like preelection canvassing. According to the police, at least 10,000 people took part in the rally and Zyuganov's speech of course was aimed at leaving no doubts that: Our cause is right and we will win [quote by Lenin]. [end recording]

At the same time, Communists began their rally in St. Petersburg on Dvortsovaya Palace Square. Our St. Petersburg correspondent Lev Golshteyn has the details.

[Begin Golshteyn recording] Obviously, it is not the best day today for the Leningrad communists of different shades, together with the Working Leningrad, Soviet Women, and the Union of Officers. Only 300-400 supporters have gathered for a meeting to mark the Soviet Armed Forces and Navy Day at the Aleksandr Column on Palace Square. The hymn of the Soviet Union and anti-government and anti-Sobchak rhetorics are being broadcast through hoarse-voiced loudspeakers. Red flags, portraits of Stalin, Komsomol members and pioneers, and a little bit aloof — a white-yellow-black flag of the Russian party and at a distance of 200 meters two trucks with OMON [Special Purpose Militia Detachment] troops — this is the picture on the background of the gloomy evening sky in St. Petersburg and a thaw that is beginning on the eve of spring. Lev Golshteyn from St. Petersburg especially for listeners of Ekho Moskvy. [end recording]

Russia: Anti-Fascists, Nationalists Clash in Moscow

LD2302211196 Moscow NTV in Russian 1600 GMT 23 Feb 96

[Report over video by unidentified correspondent; from the "Segodnya" newscast]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Correspondent] To dilute the impressions of the big communist rallies, members of the Moscow Anti-Fascist Center decided to mark Defenders of the Fatherland Day in their own way. Assembling at Novogireyevo subway station with banners proclaiming: Fascists off Russian Soil!, Barkashov,

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Zyuganov, Zhirinovskiy are birds of a feather, they set off toward Terlets park. Here, in the summer reading rooms, Russian National Unity, Aleksandr Barkashov's party has its headquarters.

The anti-fascists well understood that they would be unlikely to meet a joyous welcome. Even before they arrived at the park, there were a few scuffles in which the nationalists clearly got the upper hand. Some of the picketers arrived at the Barkashov headquarters with their faces beaten up. Here, under militia guard, the demonstrators nevertheless read out some speeches in which they cursed Fascism and called on the authorities to put an end to all its manifestations.

[Begin Yevgeniy Proshechkin recording, head of the Moscow Anti-Fascist Center] We held the picket, and we did not come here in vain, despite the fact that some of our comrades have unfortunately come to grief. Yet again, we see that the threat of Fascism is not mere raving or rumor, but really is absolutely waiting in the wings in Russia. [end recording]

[Correspondent] The anti-fascists went back to the subway with a militia unit in tow. Aleksandr Barkashov's comrades at arms followed them at a distance. [video shows small procession carrying anti-fascist banners and Russian flags; young man nursing bleeding jaw, another with a huge fresh cut on face]

Federal Assembly

Russia: Many Federal Assembly Deputies Approve of Yeltsin's Message

LD2302152996 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1449 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Lyudmila Aleksandrova and Andrey Shtorkh]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, February 23 (ITAR-TASS) — Many participants in the joint meeting of the houses of the Federal Assembly on Friday at which Russian President Boris Yeltsin presented his annual message-to-the-nation, positively assessed the message of the Head of State. On the strength of conversations in the lobbies of the meeting, Itar-Tass correspondents arrived at the conclusion that representatives of various political forces, except for left opposition, regard the message as balanced and self-critical enough and serving as a real basis for the President's election programme.

It is the most balanced, well-thought out message of the President in the past three years, a document written with a view to people, said Vladimir Lysenko, deputy of the Duma, chairman of the Russian Republican Party. He believes, however, that political steps to be taken later are more important than the message itself.

Deputy Sergey Shakhray, leader of the Party of Russian Unity and Accord, said the message "does not contain a single flaw". He believes that two-thirds of the opposition's slogans have been knocked down.

Moscow mayor Yuriy Luzhkov described the message as a document "aimed at Russia's calm and stable development, at assistance to small businesses and stabilisation of the tax system."

Eduard Rossel, governor of the Sverdlovsk region and member of the Federation Council, said that "an honest analysis of achievements and mistakes has been made and clear proposals for remedying the situation have been advanced".

"One cannot but agree with everything said in the message," said deputy Boris Fedorov, leader of Forward Russia movement. Still he believes that the point of the matter is not the contents of the message but whether it will be fulfilled.

"The President has of late been sacking some officials who should have been sacked long ago. He began to tighten discipline, also among his associates," Fedorov said. The initial steps have been taken, and Boris Yeltsin now looks as the preferable candidate also to democrats, even if they object to many of the government's actions, Fedorov said.

As regards Gennadiy Zyuganov's response, Itar-Tass reports that the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, addressing a news conference in the Duma, assessed the Presidential message as "populist" and said that one-third of it "has been copied from documents of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation of two years ago". Zyganov said he had not heard "any real recommendations for the ways of overcoming the country's present complex and tragic situation."

Russia: Duma Speaker Comments on President's Parliamentary Message

LD2302132596 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1312 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Pavel Kuznetsov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, February 23 (ITAR-TASS) — Duma Speaker Gennadiy Seleznev has described the President's State of the Nation Message to the Russian Parliament as "a speech made on the threshold of the presidential elections". In his opinion, the Russian President has "delivered a report which runs in the spirit of the current election campaign".

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The Speaker of the Lower House of the Russian Parliament believes that many parts of the President's message "sounded just as they sound in the language of the opposition".

Seleznev agreed with what the President said about the development of Russian federalism. He said that the viewpoint of the Head of the Russian State coincided with the views of the parliamentarians and of the opposition. "We all agree that Russia should not be allowed to fall apart," Seleznev stressed.

He also agreed with the President's view concerning the need to further strengthen the relations with CIS nations.

Assessing the economic chapter of the document, Seleznev stressed that he disagreed with the claim that "there are positive tendencies in the Russian economy". He said that the Duma had other information about the industrial slump, testifying that its dimensions are much larger.

The Speaker believes that the part of the message dealing with Chechnya "is very hazy". Seleznev stressed that the message did not analyse the reasons of the Chechen war.

Russia: Zyuganov, Zhirinovskiy Reflect on Yeltsin's Assembly Address

LD2302153796 Moscow 2x2 Television in Russian 1300 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Russian Communist Party leader Gennadiy Zuganov criticized Boris Yeltsin's address to the Federal Assembly today. Liberal Democrat leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, however, sees more positive elements in the address. [video shows]

[Begin recording] [Zyuganov] Overall, there is no conceptual idea of how processes in the country are developing. There is no honest and critical assessment of everything that is happening. There is not a single figure describing the economic and financial situation. The only figures were in the part about crime and those punished for slovenliness and sloppiness.

The address was, in my view, more of a ritual than the election campaign speech of a president who has been constantly advertising himself for the last week.

[Zhirinovskiy] As a document, it is good — the fight against corruption, against crime, a purge of the apparatus, getting rid of heads of administration in the Foreign Ministry, adjust our foreign trade. But this must not be just an opportunistic measure. [end recording]

Russia: State Duma Appeals to Yeltsin Over Kemerovo Situation

LD2302225996 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 2007 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Ivan Novikov]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, February 23 (ITAR-TASS) — The Russian State Duma (lower house) on Friday [23 February] called on President Boris Yeltsin "to take all necessary measures to ensure coordinated functioning of and interaction between the state power bodies in the Kemerovo region."

The Duma adopted the resolution after it looked into an appeal by members of the legislative assembly of the coal-rich Kemerovo region about a conflict between the branches of power there.

According to the appeal, the main causes of the conflict were "scandalous cases of corruption, revealed by legislators, financial abuse, and improper spending of budget funds by local executive leaders."

State controllers found out that 300 billion roubles (63 million U.S. dollars) had been misused, Kemerovo lawmakers said.

The Duma recommended Yeltsin to set up an ad-hoc committee to settle the conflict in Kemerovo. The Russian Prosecutor General's Office was instructed to examine the facts set out in the local legislators's appeal.

Regional Affairs

Russia: Results of Stavropol Elections Detailed

LD2602081296 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 0756 GMT 26 Feb 96

[By Nikolay Styazhkin]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] STAVROPOL, February 26 (ITAR-TASS) — Five out of six cities in the Stavropol Territory, situated in southern Russia, where polls of city administrative heads were held last Sunday, re-elected those whom the Russian president had appointed to these posts by his decrees five years ago.

Itar-Tass learnt at the territorial election commission on Monday that only Kislovodsk elected a new head of the administration: the elections there were carried by Viktor Beketov, manager of the city transport company. A total of 31.7 percent of those who went to the polls, voted for the new mayor.

Representative bodies of local self-government were elected in seven Stavropol cities also last Sunday. According to information from the territorial election

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committee, 43.38 percent of the electorate went to the polls in the seven cities.

The turnout dropped as against the December elections to the State Duma (Russian parliament lower house): 64.62 percent of Stavropol residents participated in the voting at that time.

Russia: Perm Residents See Injustice in Yeltsin's Promises

MK2402065596 Moscow SEGODNYA in Russian 23 Feb 96 p 2

[Report by Anatoliy Veslo: "People of Perm Decided To Find Out Whether President's 'Emotional Impulses' Are Backed by Money"]

[FBIS Translated Text] There are already those who envy the future prosperity of Yekaterinburg and Chelyabinsk, which is only to be expected after the Russian Federation president's visit. Boris Yeltsin's promise to give Yekaterinburg $10 million for the construction of a baby food factory stabbed both the administration and the people of Perm right in the heart, since they are unable to finish the construction of a similar factory due to the lack of only some 20 billion rubles. This was openly said at a news conference by Perm Oblast Governor Gennadiy Igumnov. In general, people of Perm were deeply upset by the injustice of Providence. Had a president — or any other official having the right to dispose of state property, and having started his election campaign, been born in their city — he would have certainly at least given back to his compatriots debts of the budget amounting to "some 70 billion rubles only."

Before starting to cry out loud publicly about such an injustice, however, the practical people of Perm decided to find out whether there indeed exists a horn of plenty that will bring prosperity to the people of Yekaterinburg and Chelyabinsk. Yevgeniy Sapiro, head of the Perm Oblast Legislative Assembly, sent an official inquiry to the Russian president's administration regarding the funds promised by the president to local authorities and enterprises during his working visit to Yekaterinburg and Chelyabinsk. The inquiry — as cited by Perm INTERFAX correspondent — reads: "Have such emotional impulses of Boris Yeltsin been envisioned in the country's budget?"

Russia: Kaliningrad To Sue Government Over Heat Supply, Wage Crisis

MM2302155996 Moscow KRASNAYA ZVEZDA in Russian 23 Feb 96 p 1

[Report by Valeriy Gromak under the "News" rubric: "For Some a Festival, for Others..."]

[FBIS Translated Text] Kaliningrad — A critical situation has taken shape with the heat supply to the housing stock in Kaliningrad Oblast and the payment of wages to employees of budget-funded organizations. In practice half the oblast's apartment blocks are without a heat and hot water supply. This despite the fact that this year the oblast has been hit by frosts unprecedented for the past 20 years.

At their extraordinary session deputies of Kaliningrad Oblast Duma proposed that the oblast administration act as the plaintiff in a statement of claim to court against the Russian Government in connection with its failure to carry out its obligations with regard to funding federal structures located on the oblast's territory and in connection with arrears relating to work funded from the oblast budget and carried out.

Russia: Ingush Mark 52d Anniversary of Forced Deportation

LD2302162896 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1252 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Valeriy Shanayev]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] VLADIKAVKAZ, February 23 (ITAR-TASS) — Gloomy forecasts of journalists and politicians, who predicted a dramatic worsening of the situation in the zone of the Ossetian-Ingush conflict on the day of the 52th anniversary of the forced deportation of Chechens and Ingushs from the Northern Caucasus, did not come true.

The current situation in the villages of the Prigorodniy District with Ossetian and Ingush population is stable, on the whole, an officer on duty at the North Ossetian Interior Ministry told Tass. Some 5,000 ethnic Ingushs from Ingushetia visited burial grounds and laid flowers on the graves of their relatives. Interior Ministry bodies of North Ossetia ensured the observance of law and order in those populated localities and the protection of transport columns. No cases of confrontation for ethnic reasons were registered. This must have disappointed some journalists, who expected incidents, based on inter-ethnic strife.

Most residents of the Prigorodniy District of North Ossetia have nothing against the return of the Ingushs, who did not take part in armed clashes in the autumn

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of 1992, head of the local administration of the district Pavel Tedeyev told Tass. People realise that hostility cannot last forever. He said that a pattern of the reconciliation of two nations was being worked out in the Prigorodniy District. The idea of the impossibility for Ossetians and Ingushs to live side by side was rejected. A treaty on economic and cultural cooperation between North Ossetia and Ingushetia is being drafted. It will give a new impetus to the process of the return home of Ingush refugees, speed up the construction of dwellings and the whole of infrastructure in the conflict zone, ensure the safety of the civilian population and promote the reconciliation. Tedeyev confirmed the fact that 1,300 Ingush families had already returned to the villages of the Prigorodniy District. At present some 13,000 ethnic Ingushs are living in North Ossetia.

Russia: UN Mission Centers on North Caucasian Refugees

LD2402125496 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1242 GMT 24 Feb 96

[By Valeriy Shanayev]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] VLADIKAVKAZ, February 24 (ITAR-TASS) — Eduard Metsayev, North Ossetian Minister for Nationalities and Foreign Relations, as well as Moreau Pascal (France) and Adriano Silvestri (Italy), advisers for humanitarian programmes and legal affairs of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, who held a meeting here on Saturday, centred on questions connected with creating normal living conditions for refugees and displaced persons in North Ossetia.

They are on a fact-finding mission in the republic already for several days.

Turning to the situation in the region, the minister noted that some forces in the Caucasus are interested in destabilising the situation. The armed confrontation of rebels in the Chechen Republic also has a negative influence on the situation in southern Russia.

Besides, the problem of refugees makes solution of many social and economic issues more difficult in the republic. Metsayev confirmed that there are now 60,000 refugees in North Ossetia from various areas of the former Soviet Union.

Pascal said that several planes from the U.N. mission, UNICEF and other international charity organisations already arrived at the Vladikavkaz airport in the recent past.

They brought more than 300 tons of humanitarian aid to refugees, large and needy families. Deliveries of foodstuffs, clothing, medicines and prime necessities are under control of representatives from the U.N. mission.

Pascal refuted reports by some mass media that humanitarian aid, coming to the North Caucasus from the United Nations, is allegedly received by Chechen rebels. "We do not know such facts," the representative said.

Russia: Two Men Detained at Far East Missile Base

LD2302184996 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1350 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] VLADIVOSTOK, February 23 (INTERFAX-EURASIA) — Guards at one of the military bases in the Maritime Territory (the Russian Far East) where ballistic missiles are located detained two persons on the base's territory Thursday.

The soldiers had detected the intruders in a secret zone, a spokesman for the Maritime Interior Department told Interfax-Eurasia.

During an examination of the intruder's belongings, the soldiers found tools which could be used to take precious metals from missiles' component parts.

An investigation is under way.

Russia: Moscow Communist-Rally Marking 'Soviet' Army Day

MM2302212196 Moscow SOVETSKAYA ROSSIYA in Russian 24 Feb 96 p 1

[Report by Zhanna Kasyanenko: "March Beneath Red Banners. Slogans of the Festival Devoted to Soviet Army and Navy Day: 'Army, Be With the People!' and 'Army, Defend the People!'"]

[FBIS Translated Text] A festive march and rally devoted to Soviet Army and Navy Day were being held in Moscow during the evening — precisely during the hours when the newspaper is already being signed to press. To hold it up would mean depriving the readers of the possibility of obtaining the latest issue on time. Therefore we have decided to describe the event in the words of its organizers, with whom we met a few hours before the start of the march.

"The Moscow Government has stubbornly resisted the holding of festivities," Vladimir Lakeyev, chairman of the joint organizing committee of left-wing and patriotic forces, said. "Two court investigations have preceded this day. The first time Tverskoy Municipal Court allowed, contrary to the Moscow Government's refusal, the march to pass along Tverskaya Street, from Mayakovskiy Square to Sverdlov Square [Soviet era name for Teatralnaya Square]. But as early as 21 February the Moscow City Court received an appeal from the government, and the Tverskoy Court's ruling was revised. Thanks to our coordinated statements in

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court and the concerted actions of representatives of the CPRF [Communist Party of the Russian Federation], the RCWP [Russian Communist Workers' Party], and the Officers' Union, we nonetheless upheld the right to have the march and rally. Although they did alter the route and shorten it. Now the participants will gather not in Mayakovskiy Square but in Pushkin Square."

Of course, this creates difficulties, as we have not managed to notify everyone of the changes. We have recruited our Komsomol members for work. They will be on duty at the previously announced meeting place and will send people to Pushkin Square.

As announced, the rally will be held in Sverdlov Square, by the monument to Karl Marx. It is assumed that approximately 30,000 Muscovites will gather for it, although, to judge from applications lodged with the organizing committee by various organizations, this figure will be considerably larger.

The main slogans of this festival are "Army, be with the people!" and "Army, defend the people!" Of course, the march will proceed beneath red banners. The column will be led by Lieutenant General Albert Makashov, State Duma deputy. He will also open the rally. Participating in it and addressing it will be CPRF leader Gennadiy Zyuganov; Viktor Anpilov and Vladimir Gusev, the leaders of "Working Russia" and "Working Capital"; Colonel General Mikhail Titov; State Duma Deputies Nikolay Ryzhkov, Sergey Baburin.... It is gratifying that practically all opposition forces will participate in it.

The rally will start with the Anthem of the Soviet Union and will finish with the song "Arise, vast country!" — a song which during these troubled years has already become a symbol of unity and struggle.

Our comrades from the Kirovskiy CPRF Rayon Committee have decided to hold festivities also in their own rayon, but not until 24 February. We invite all who value military honor and our Army's good name to participate in this measure. The rally in Kirovskiy Rayon will commence at 1400 hours 24 February outside the "Ladoga" Movie Theater ("Medvedkovo" subway station). State Duma deputies and leaders of the Moscow CPRF City Committee will also participate in it.

Russia: Moscow Ecological Situation 'Relatively Calm' After Fire

LD2602130796 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1237 GMT 26 Feb 96

[By Anna Varshavskaya]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, February 26 (ITAR-TASS) — The ecological situation in Moscow is now relatively calm. Viktor Vlasov, Deputy Chairman of the Moscow Committee of Natural Resources, said this to Itar-Tass on Monday, commenting on the ecological consequences of the fire at the Moscow tire plant lasting for the second day.

From Sunday, samples of air were taken in the areas where the concentration of pollutants was most probable, Vlasov said. Samples were taken in the direction in which smoke was spreading. Luckily, contrary to specialists' fears, the contents of sulphur dioxide in the air was within permissible limits. A strong wind was blowing on Sunday which quickly dispersed pollutants. However, measurements of carbon monoxyde in places close to the site of the fire were double the permissible limit.

Economic Issues

Russia: Military-Industrial Production Termed 'Outright Disaster'

LD2602113996 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1103 GMT 26 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, Feb 26 (INTERFAX) - Russia's military industrial complex cut production by nearly 26 percent last month against January 1995, Vitaliy Vitebskiy, deputy chief of the state committee for munitions production, has said.

He called the slump "an outright disaster."

According to him, the shipbuilding industry alone had a growth of nearly 2.5 percent last month against January 1995. The worst slumps were in aircraft construction by almost 34 percent, in communication facilities production by over 32 percent, in weapons manufacturing by 30 percent, and in the missile industry by almost 30 percent.

By and large, civilian production in the military industrial complex last month was only 77.5 percent and military production was just 66.5 percent of the January 1995 output. Although production lost momentum last year, it has begun to regain it this year, Vitebsky said.

As the January 1996 output is only one fourth of that in early 1991, "prompt measures have to be adopted." Otherwise, the whole defense industry will soon come to a halt, he said.

Russia: Shokhin Interviewed on IMF Loan

LD2302233896 Moscow NTV in Russian 1635 GMT 22 Feb 96

[Studio interview with Aleksandr Shokhin, first deputy chairman of the Russian State Duma, by correspondent

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Yevgeniy Kiselev; from the "Hero of the Day" program — live]

[FBIS Summary] Kiselev begins by saying that the "Hero of the Day" today, the day the IMF announced it will grant over $10 billion in credits to Russia, is Aleksandr Shokhin, first deputy chairman of the State Duma, who was for a long period Russia's representative with the IMF and World Bank.

Shokhin says he does not think the IMF's decision was dictated by political considerations, in the interests of maintaining stability and the status quo in Russia. The Russian Government, Shokhin declares, has met the IMF's requirements, namely the reduction of inflation and abolition of oil and gas export duties. Asked whether this will mean an abrupt increase in fuel prices, Shokhin says that the inflation levels programmed in the budget will prevent any abrupt rises.

Asked what Russia has gained from the nearly $11 billion in credits it has received since 1992, Shokhin adds that these credits have been accompanied by debt rescheduling. In addition to building up currency reserves, the funds have been used to finance the welfare sector of the budget. Shokhin says that a tried and tested negotiating tactic had been to tell the IMF that the credits were already allocated.

Shokhin says that Interior Minister Anatoliy Kulikov's economic proposals will have no impact on the IMF decision, since the latter has confidence in the president and prime minister. Reaching the agreement with the IMF was not so much a victory for the president and government as for common sense, Shokhin says: "Now that this agreement has been reached, there will be less speculation about the possibility of popularist or reformist policy. The president's election campaign promises must rest on a pretty firm ground — backed by the legislators, incidentally, and enshrined in the 1996 budget law. This stabilizes the situation," Shokhin says, and gives grounds for believing there will be continuity of policy.

Asked how the IMF will react to a Zyuganov victory in the elections, Shokhin says that as long as there is continuity of policy, it will make no difference. Credits might be suspended if legislation were to be changed, however. Shokhin refuses to speculate on what the communists might do in that respect, since he does not think they will come to power. "For the continuity of economic and political policies," Shokhin says, Yeltsin must win. The ideal situation will be for Russia Is Our Home, Yabloko, and Russia's Democratic Choice all to back Yeltsin, he says, adding that he hopes the democrats will draw the necessary lessons from the December elections.

Russia: Minister Concerned With Delay in World Bank Credit

LD2402161696 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1406 GMT 24 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, February 24 (INTERFAX) — The Russian Construction Ministry is concerned about the delay in the application of the World Bank credit worth $400 million for the development of the construction industry, Russian Construction Minister Yefim Basin said at a conference in the ministry.

It is for the first time that Russia received a World Bank credit intended for resolving problems regarding housing construction, he said.

The World Bank credit is to be mainly used in three areas, Basin said. He said $150 million would be spent on the development of urban infrastructure. Corresponding tenders have already been held, and five towns which will be the construction sites have been selected.

Another $120 million will be used for developing mortgage crediting, Basin said. A plan is now being drawn up to stimulate the disbursement and use of credits on mortgage, he said.

Another $130 million will be spent on structural reforms regarding construction enterprises, Basin said.

Among problems hindering the implementation of structural reforms, those at the conference cited too narrow a list of Russian creditor banks serving the credit, too high interest rates set by Russian commercial banks (up to 15 percent) and the absence of appropriate auditing practice in Russia (although no credit can be disbursed without auditing reports for three years).

Some 130-140 enterprises which can claim money out of the World Bank credit have been selected as well as priority projects in line with international standards, Head of the Construction Ministry's department for the construction industry Yevgeniy Bortnikov said. The projects provide for production of heat-insulating material, decorating material, roofing material, millwork, etc.

There are over 100 projects out of which those corresponding with World Bank requirements will be selected in the next few days, Bortnikov said.

Russia: IMF Managing Director Camdessus Meets Media Chiefs

LD2502124496 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1206 GMT 25 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MOSCOW, February 25 (ITAR-TASS) — A meeting between Russian media

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chiefs and Michel Camdessus, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), was held at the Central House of Journalists on Sunday.

Mr Camdessus described a programme for international assistance in stabilising the Russian economy for the next three years and expressed confidence that an economic growth at 6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) is possible in 1998.

"In 1995, Russia made a serious step towards stabilisation. Good prospects for the future are opening up now," the IMF Managing Director pointed out.

Touching upon the hard-and-fast requirements which the IMF sets for countries which use its credits, Mr Camdessus noted that the chief requirement of the IMF is for a country to keep commitment to the strategy of advancement towards a robust market economy. "We finance not just some extravagant projects but promote a restructuring of the economic basis and help strengthen the balance of payments," the IMF chief said.

Inflation is the most unfair tax which bears most heavily on the poorest sections of the population. It is precisely anti-inflationary measures that constitute a major component of economic and financial stabilisation which is being effected by the Russian government, Mr Camdessus told Russian media chiefs.

In response to journalists' question as to whether the developments in the Chechen Republic influenced the adoption of the decision to grant an IMF credit, Mr Camdessus pointed out that "none of members of the IMF Board of Executive Directors told me that it is necessary to delay the allocation of funds to Russia pending a settlement of the situation in Chechnya".

"It is all the more difficult for me to dispute the decision of the Council of Europe to grant CE membership to Russia, even in the light of the on-going Chechen conflict," he added.

Having pointed out the lack of divergences in the text of President Boris Yeltsin's message to the Federal Assembly and the text of the Joint Statement of the Government and the Central Bank of Russia, Mr Camdessus said: "No one may have any doubt about the determination of the President of Russia to carry on struggle for the realisation of reforms and against inflation and to build on what was achieved in 1995".

The meeting with Michel Camdessus was attended by Vitaliy Ignatenko, Russian Vice-Premier, Vsevolod Bogdanov, Chairman of the Journalists' Union of Russia, Pavel Gusev, Head of the Moscow Journalists' Union, Igor Golembiovskiy, President of the Chief Editors' Club, and the Chief Editors of a number of leading Russian newspapers, television and radio networks.

Russia: De Beers Shows 'Tough Opposition' in Talks

LD2302203696 Moscow NTV in Russian 1600 GMT 23 Feb 96

[From the "Segodnya" newscast]

[FBIS Translated Text] Russian Finance Minister Vladimir Panskov admits that defending Russia's interests in the talks with De Beers deputy chairman Nicholas Oppenheimer was not at all easy. An agreement on the terms initially proposed by the world diamond monopoly would have turned Russia into a supplier of uncut diamonds, in other words a raw materials adjunct of De Beers: experts reckon Russia would lose about $300 million a year trading that way.

[Begin Panskov recording] We do not want to trade only in uncut diamonds; we want to trade on the world market in the finished product, in cut diamonds and diamond jewellery. We came up against pretty tough opposition from De Beers on this, because they are used to talking from a position of force —the last agreement was signed under the Soviet Union. [end recording]

Vladimir Panskov said that, following lengthy and tense discussions, the Russian Government succeeded in forcing the De Beers management to respect the interests of the Russian diamond-cutting industry, and this was reflected in the memorandum signed. The talks were sometimes tough: had De Beers refused to make concessions, Moscow had its own scenario ready.

[Begin Panskov recording] We calculated all the options. If De Beers had refused to accept our conditions, we were prepared not to sign the agreement and to put our diamonds on the world market independently. [end recording]

Had the dispute between Russia and De Beers become a reality, the world diamond market would have been on the brink of a serious crisis. This did not happen, however. It emerges from the memorandum signed today that the sides were on the whole satisfied with one another, and the more than 30 years of cooperation between Russia and De Beers will be continued.

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International Affairs

Ukraine: Defense Minister Explains Views on NATO Cooperation

LD2202175596 Kiev UNIAR in Ukrainian 1345 GMT 22 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Ukraine is in favor of "soft" forms of cooperation with NATO, visiting Ukrainian Defense Minister Valeriy Shmarov said in a speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. The Ukrainian defense minister considers such "soft" forms to be the Partnership for Peace program, for which Ukraine has an individual program, and peacekeeping activity which, in the minister's opinion, is the basis for bringing together countries which only yesterday were mutually hostile. In addition, Valeriy Shmarov noted that Ukraine is ready to take part in peacekeeping operations on CIS territory but only under a UN flag.

The Ukrainian defense minister considers rapid advancement by Eastern European countries into NATO as dangerous, as such speed could lead to renewed international tension.

On 21 February the Ukrainian defense minister met representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora. Replying to questions regarding the Ukrainian Armed Forces' main enemy, Valeriy Shmarov said that "we do not see one in the army of a single country in the world." In the opinion of the Ukrainian defense minister, the Ukrainian troops' main "enemy" now is the lack of fuel. The minister believes this problem could be resolved rapidly by developing our own fuel fields. [passage omitted]

Ukraine: Transport Planes Being Used Legally in Colombia

LD2302202696 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1732 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Mikhail Makeyev]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] BOGOTA, February 23 (Itar-Tass) — Eight Ukrainian transport planes are being used for freight carriages in Colombia on legal grounds, Itar-Tass was told at the Colombian Civil Aviation Board. They were rented with the right of eventually being bought out by the "Meruc" leasing air corporation, registered in Florida. This company is listed at the Colombia Civil Aviation Board as an American enterprise, one of whose co-owners is Colombian citizen Luis E. Silva. The Board has carried out all the necessary formalities to get a permit for the its right to effect freight carriages in Colombia. Eight Ukrainian planes were carefully checked and representatives of the local civil aviation say that they were even checked to see whether they "could be used for drug trafficking". Only after that the needed certificate was issued.

This statement by the Colombian civil aviation representatives was made after Ukraine was accused of selling and leasing An-32 planes to Colombian drug dealers. For instance, this allegation was published last Tuesday by the newspaper "Los Angeles Times".

Reports coming in from Colombia indicate that the American side had repeatedly expressed similar complaints to Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma during his official visit to the United States. The American side is asserting that Ukrainian planes are being used for smuggling drugs into the United States.

According to information issued by the Colombian Civil Aviation Board there are three other single-engine An-2 planes in Colombia, in addition to the eight aforesaid An-32B. They belong to some Colombian companies.

While furnishing these figures, representatives of the Board pointed out that it had registers and issues permits for air carriages, but "is not empowered to control the commercial activities of air companies".

Ukraine: Kuchma Briefs Journalists on U.S. Trip, Nuclear Weapons

LD2402152696 Kiev UNIAN in Ukrainian 1330 GMT 24 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Kiev — Ukraine's President Leonid Kuchma described his visit to Washington as "important" at a briefing for journalists on 24 February. "IMF leader Michel Camdessus promised that the day after the Ukrainian parliament finally approves the 1996 state budget, the IMF would grant Ukraine the fourth tranche of the 'stand-by' loan, to the value of $900 million," he said. The president said that money would be used for structural reorganization of the country's economy. Kuchma said the sum, to be allocated by the IMF within the framework of the three-year cooperation program, had not been discussed with the IMF leadership. However, it will be expressed in several billion dollars, he said.

Kuchma said he was touching on the issue of Moscow's compensation to Ukraine for the tactical nuclear weapons that had been transferred from Ukraine to Russia at all levels, in particular during his meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton. "Having signed the trilateral statement on the transfer of nuclear weapons from Ukraine on 14 January 1994, the United States became the guarantor of the fulfillment by Russia of its obligations on payment of compensation to Ukraine for the tactical nuclear weapons," he said.

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Kuchma said Ukraine agreed to use that money toward settling Ukraine's debt to Russia. (According to UNIAN, the sum amounts to approximately $700 million.)

The president said the U.S. leadership gave its assurances that it would raise the issue in a telephone conversation between Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin and at the G-7 summit in Moscow in May. Kuchma said that, on his initiative, the issue of compensation would be discussed at the Moscow summit separately from the issue of closing down the Chernobyl nuclear power station.

Ukraine: Kuchma on Hopes for Compensation for Nuclear Weapons

LD2302153296 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1350 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KIEV, Feb 23 (Interfax - Ukraine) — Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma has voiced the hope that a solution to the issue of recompensation for tactical nuclear weapons withdrawn from Ukraine will be found.

Kuchma told reporters on the plane en route to Kiev from Washington D.C. friday that he had raised this issue at his meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in January 1996. Yeltsin "gave corresponding instructions in my presence," Kuchma said.

"I proposed to Yeltsin that a sum out of Ukrainian debts equivalent to the cost of these weapons be written off," Kuchma said, adding that, according to experts, a sum of about $500 million to $700 million could be considered.

Tactical nuclear weapons were removed from Ukrainian territory to Russia in 1992.

Ukraine: Kuchma Holds News Conference on U.S. Visit

LD2402233896 Kiev UT-1 Television Network in Ukrainian 1935 GMT 24 Feb 96

[Report on news conference by Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma with unidentified correspondents in Kiev on 24 February — recorded; no video available]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Announcer] Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma held a news conference today on the results of his working visit to the United States. Here is a video report from this news conference.

[Kuchma] Please accept our apologies for disrupting your weekend, but I am leaving today for a holiday break myself, so we decided to meet now and inform you about the results of the visit to the United States. This visit was important from all points. It was full of meetings, starting from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, and including fruitful talks with the U.S. President and Vice President Gore. I invited Vice President Gore to visit Ukraine in April for the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. We also agreed to set up a joint U.S.-Ukrainian commission and decided who will be heading it. We agreed at the top level that such a commission should exist, because we need a permanent dialogue in the economic sphere, instead of following events through the media and then getting down to this or that issue. We held talks with the secretary of state, Defense Secretary [William] Perry and many other meetings.

[Correspondent] Having described the significance of the visit in general terms, the Ukrainian president followed his opening remarks with a question-and-answer session with Ukrainian and foreign journalists, in which he dwelled in detail on the dialogue between Ukraine and the United States, and on the welcome and response given to our delegation there.

[Kuchma] I compared this visit to the United States with my official visit there at the end of 1994, and these were two absolutely different visits, from the point of view of the attention paid to the Ukrainian delegation. I felt that Ukraine was treated as a country which should be a key factor, as we say, of stability, first of all in Europe. So, there have been very serious changes. The meetings with Gore and Clinton, which according to protocol should have been 30 minutes each, actually took exactly one hour with Gore and one hour and five minutes with Clinton, as members of our delegation noted. Clinton had a previous meeting with congressmen, so he postponed our meeting until later and we had to wander around the White House.

Now the ball is in our court, and it is up to us what kind of policy to pursue.

[Correspondent] NEZAVISIMOST newspaper asked the president about his reaction to the statement made by [parliament speaker] Oleksandr Moroz in his speech at the Ukrainian Socialist Party conference, and to a statement by one of the parliamentary faction leaders that the constitution can trigger a political crisis, as well as about the president's views about the Supreme Council.

[Kuchma] I think there is no doubt that the debate on the constitution and its adoption will be used by some political forces for their own benefit. And indeed, from the point of the political situation deteriorating, it is a fact, and there is no need to make a tragedy of it.

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About the constitution, it is a matter of great urgency, to guarantee the irreversibility of our choice. Because there is one major difference between us and the Communists. They want to build a Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, as their representative told a Supreme Council session, and I want to build a civilized, law-governed state. This is the difference between us.

As for Oleksandr Moroz's statement, that is his own business. I am only glad that he revealed his true face. He kept telling us from the Supreme Council podium that he was aiming for social democracy, and now he defined his position very clearly. That is up to him as the leader of the Socialist Party. It is unfortunate, however, that he is using his position in the Supreme Council to do this. [passage indistinct; three-minute break in reception]

[Kuchma, in progress] ...Unfortunately, I learned only the day before yesterday, while still in the United States, that he was invited here. I would gladly meet him, but that is a matter for the Supreme Council to handle. We are building a law-governed state, where every branch handles its own affairs independently. Moroz is acting independently. He sent the invitation. It is unfortunate, but I cannot meet the [Russian] Duma speaker, because I am leaving for a short vacation.

[Unidentified correspondent] Could you tell us please, what was your minimum and maximum objective for the U.S .visit, and could you dwell on the subject of international aid for the elimination of the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster?

[Kuchma] My main objective in the United States was to obtain political and economic support for Ukraine. Not only did we feel this support, but we heard it from the mouths of top U.S. officials. Clinton, Gore, the secretary of state, and the secretary of defense all stated it in front of the press. So I think this was the main objective achieved. The United States regards Ukraine as its strategic partner, not only in verbal terms, but in action.

About the Chernobyl disaster, unfortunately, the world has virtually forgotten that it happened. We are the country that suffered the most, and we are, in many aspects, too shy about it. Taking into account the upcoming 10th anniversary and the fact that a government commission has been set up, headed by the prime minister, we need to step up our efforts in this area. Without being shy, I will say this. We need to show the world how much Ukraine has really lost, economically and, mainly, in terms of the health of future generations. Because the world is putting pressure on us to close down the Chernobyl plant, but it forgets about everything else. Let us act together, and please, help us in this matter.

[Unidentified correspondent] Mr. President, permit me to congratulate you on receiving a prestigious award, the Medal of Freedom. In this connection, (?you said) it was not only a matter of prestige but a kind of obligation. Could you tell us please what obligations does this medal place upon you before the Ukrainian people and the world community?

[Kuchma] Thank you. First of all, as the president, I gave my word to build a state in which every individual would feel free.

[Correspondent] Some politicians say there is a crisis in the Supreme Council, a PRAVDA UKRAINY correspondent said. This is likely to be the case also during the adoption of the constitution. Is it possible that the Supreme Council will face early dissolution, initiated by some left-wing members of parliament?

[Kuchma] This is something new in the Socialist Party's behavior. I keep getting the urge to set up a commission of economists and financiers and calculate the loss of profits from the delay in the passage of economic legislation in parliament. It is happening, you can see it yourself. What did the Supreme Council do last week? Again, it discussed the adoption procedure for the constitution. But there is a law about that, and it should be stuck to. I am against the Supreme Council's dissolution, both for economic and political reasons. We have seen the Supreme Council elections, and how many repeat elections there have been. Let us instead work with greater efficiency. Maybe we should again raise the question about a ban on political debates in the Supreme Council.

[Correspondent] Journalists asked the president about his reaction to the appointment of a new Black Sea Fleet commander without consultation with Ukraine.

[Kuchma] As you know, the agreement signed by [former President] Leonid Makarovych Kravchuk and [Russian President Boris] Yeltsin on the joint Black Sea Fleet expired on 1 January. There is no Ukrainian-Russian fleet as of 1 January. There is a separate Russian and a separate Ukrainian fleet. So, in legal terms, everything is absolutely correct. We should maintain a permanent dialogue with Russia, by all means. We should be very clear about each other's opinion, hearing it not through the press, but from the horse's mouth.

[Correspondent] The IMF stand-by credit expires this year. What amount does Ukraine expect to receive in the new three-year credit term?

[Kuchma] As you know, the fourth tranche is $900 million, and [IMF Director Michel] Camdessus told the media after our meeting that this amount would be transferred to Ukraine the day after the budget is

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passed. As for the next three-year amount, it was not a subject of the talks, but we are talking about billions of dollars. I received assurances from Camdessus that the IMF would extend full support to Ukraine. But this support is hinged on the well-known conditions that we should not throw money down the drain, should not print our own cash, and so on.

I will say again that our main task is to use the money received from the IMF, the World Bank, other countries and organizations only for the structural reform of our entire economy. Because if we simply siphon this money to Moscow and Turkmenistan, we are in trouble. Our primary task is power engineering. We should have the kind of power engineering whereby we can minimize our need for oil, gas, crude oil and coal. This is a saving [word indistinct]. Right now, we (?are in fuel bondage).

[Correspondent] Were the allegations in the U.S. media about Ukraine prior to both of President Kuchma's U.S. visits coincidental, or was there somebody behind them, was one of the questions asked. In particular, this concerns an article published in the LOS ANGELES TIMES about the alleged use of Ukrainian aircraft in drug trafficking.

[Kuchma] I do not think that the appearance of this article in the LOS ANGELES TIMES was coincidental. Somebody was behind it. We have many so-called friends. Accusing the Ukrainian Government of involvement in this matter is, you understand, ridiculous. The government has nothing to do with this. During our news conference together with Clinton, I asked journalists, what about arms trafficking everywhere, in Yugoslavia and other trouble spots, who should be asked about that?

Anyway, we shall thoroughly investigate this incident and make our conclusions. If it turns out to be true, although our commission was there [Colombia] in September and saw that all of our planes were used properly, we cannot react favorably, of course, to drug trafficking. It is horrible. On the other hand, I thanked the LOS ANGELES TIMES for this wonderful promotion of our planes. Wonderful promotion. The way they described them, these AN-32 planes of ours are second to none.

[Unidentified correspondent] Mr. President, we know that some political and government circles in the United States are skeptical about the progress of reforms in Ukraine and reluctant to grant financial aid. Did you manage to convince them of the opposite? And another question. What is Ukraine's current position in the Ukraine-Russia-U.S. triangle?

[Kuchma] I am absolutely sure that there is always somebody behind these (?views). I am talking about reports in the press, including the American press, that reforms are slow in Ukraine. First of all, it is our own fault. Because we lack normal businesslike cooperation with the IMF and the World Bank, and also because we, through our sluggishness or for some other reason, tend to delay the simplest of decisions. And then we always have to explain that one should not look only at the figures, but one should take into account the socioeconomic and political situation that has developed in Ukraine. One has to consider the fact that for three years, virtually nothing was being done. We have almost no resources left.

We also discussed the triangle, and the main issue now is the upcoming presidential election in Russia. A good, normal relationship between Ukraine and Russia is in the interests of the United States. I want to stress this again. And I think this is very good. But it is also in the United States' interests to have an independent Ukraine on the political map of the world.

[Unidentified correspondent] You are a co-chairman of the constitutional commission. Do you believe that it should meet now that the working group has completed work on the draft, which is now being discussed in the Supreme Council factions? Are you sure that a referendum will take place if called?

[Kuchma] If the working commission is done with the draft, although [Justice Minister] Serhiy Holovatyy tells me that it is not quite ready, we shall come to agreement about further cooperation. The draft will be circulated to members of the constitutional commission and faction leaders in parliament; they will study it, and then we shall hold a meeting of the constitutional commission. About the referendum, I am sure of one thing. If we talk about the future of the country, people will definitely come to the polls. And the constitution is the future.

[Oleksyuk] I am Oleksyuk from Ukrainian radio news. Mr. President, you said you agreed on the need to set up a Ukrainian-U.S. commission. What issues will be handled by this commission and who will be on it? Another question, if I may, how do you assess the preparation for the spring sowing? Thank you.

[Kuchma] So far we agreed that I will be heading this commission for the Ukrainian side, and Vice President Al Gore for the United States. I am confident that we have a lot of unused potential in our relations with the United States. Until now, it has been a stop-and-go kind of process. This commission will deal with all issues facing us in our relationship at the moment. These are not purely economic issues, because a lot depends also on political developments. One should remember

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that a presidential election campaign is underway in the United States, and Gore is a key player in this campaign. Still, we have practically agreed this at the presidential level.

With regard to the spring sowing, the situation in agriculture is difficult indeed, much as I would have liked it to be different. There is a shortage of spare parts, (?equipment), fuel. According to reports from local administration heads, [words indistinct] about 70 percent. But the government has made a number of decisions, and one is to channel some of the money received in loans to the countryside.

[Unidentified correspondent] What will be the next steps in dealing with the Black Sea Fleet problem?

[Kuchma] I already said that, whatever solution we choose, it will never please everybody either in Ukraine or in Russia. There is no solution which would make both sides 100 percent happy. Most of the issues have been settled by now. The only one remaining is the status of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and the terms of its deployment. There are no other issues. And this one is an economic and political one. It is a question of territory, and the length of the Russian fleet's stay in our territory. It is a complex issue.

Thank you very much.

Ukraine: Kuchma: No More Russian-Ukrainian Fleet on Black Sea

LD2302204596 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1701 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KIEV, Feb 23 (Interfax - Ukraine) — Admiral Viktor Kravchenko's appointment to the post of commander of the Black Sea Fleet testifies to the fact that "there is no more Russian-Ukrainian Fleet, there is only a Russian Black Sea Fleet," Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma told journalists aboard an aircraft on route from Washington to Kiev Friday.

Kiev had nothing to do with this appointment, he said.

"I've heard much good about Kravchenko, as about a good man and professional," Kuchma said.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed a decree on Kravchenko's appointment on February 22.

Ukraine: Kuchma Backs BSF Commander, Comments on Talks With Moscow

LD2402155896 Kiev UNIAN in Ukrainian 1330 GMT 24 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Kiev — The edict by Russian President Boris Yeltsin appointing Viktor Kravchenko to the post of Black Sea Fleet [BSF] commander "is absolutely correct," Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma believes.

He told journalists at a briefing on 24 February that the Sochi agreement on joint command of the Black Sea Fleet had been valid until 1 January. "After that date there have been Russian and Ukrainian fleets on the Black Sea," he said.

Touching on the settlement of the Black Sea Fleet issue between Ukraine and Russia, Kuchma remarked that the majority of problems had been solved, except for those connected with the status of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and conditions of its basing in Crimea. Kuchma believes these problems "are of a political and economic nature at the same time."

Ukraine: Kuchma Unable To Meet Russian Duma Speaker Seleznev

LD2402163596 Kiev UNIAN in Ukrainian 1330 GMT 24 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Kiev — Touching on the forthcoming visit to Ukraine by a delegation of the Russian Federation State Duma, President Leonid Kuchma told journalists at a briefing on 24 February that sides should always exchange opinions. "However, Russian deputies visit us, especially Crimea, more frequently than Ukrainian deputies visit Moscow," he said.

The president believes that the dialogue with Russia should be held on a permanent basis. Meanwhile, he said he had not been informed of the forthcoming visit by Russian members of parliament and learned about it from the U.S. press. Kuchma said "this is evidence of the fact that there is a lack of coordination between the legislative and executive powers."

Kuchma said he would be "glad" to meet Gennadiy Seleznev, chairman of the Russian State Duma; however, he will not be able to because he will be on a short term leave as of 26 February.

Ukraine: Kuchma Says Russian Elections Important for CIS

LD2302192796 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1715 GMT 23 Feb 96

[By Ivan Lebedev]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] WASHINGTON, February 23 (Itar-Tass) — "The results of the upcoming presidential elections in Russia will be exceedingly important not only for determining the way along which the Russian Federation will develop in the future but are also for the

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development of Ukraine and the other former Soviet republics," Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, said on Thursday [22 February], addressing a press [as received] called after his meeting with leaders of the American Overseas Private Investments Corporation and representatives from several leading industrial companies of the United States.

"As to the attitude of the Ukrainian president to the upcoming presidential elections in Russia, you all know it all very well," Kuchma said, replying to an Itar-Tass question. "I have informed President Clinton about it, and I am ready to repeat what I said here today. I wish success to President Boris Yeltsin in spite of all the difficulties that Russia is now experiencing."

Describing his meeting with U.S. President Bill Clinton at the White House, Kuchma noted that they discussed, among other problems, "the present Russian-Ukrainian relations and questions linked with the upcoming presidential elections in Russia." According to Kuchma, he drew the conclusion from these negotiations that "the United States and the U.S. president are interested in Russia and Ukraine having good and friendly relations."

National Affairs

Ukraine: Kuchma Opposes Dissolution of Parliament

LD2402185696 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1649 GMT 24 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] KIEV, Feb 24 (Interfax - Ukraine) - Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma on Saturday protested against the proposed dissolution of parliament and called for the earliest possible adoption of a new constitution.

At a news conference in Kiev, he also spoke against any attempts by the legislature to issue laws on the procedure for the adoption of the constitution. "There is the way that is stipulated in the Constitutional Agreement," he said. "It is that way we must stick to. There will be no other way."

The idea of dissolving parliament came from the Socialist Party, whose parliamentary leader, Ivan Chizh, earlier warned at a news conference in the capital that the party, which wants the president's powers drastically curtailed, would be working for the disbandment of the present legislature to prevent the adoption of an "undemocratic" constitution. "The leftists will be pressing for a parliamentary or parliamentary-presidential form of government and for giving authority to councils of people's deputies," Chizh said.

The proposed draft constitution, if approved, is bound to provoke "a serious aggravation of the political situation in the country," he argued.

"For the Socialists the constitution is the line beyond which all compromises will have been exhausted."

He also claimed "a wave of hostility is being raised" against the Socialist Party leader, parliamentary chairman Oleksandr Moroz, and that it is designed to have Moroz dismissed from his parliamentary post.

Kuchma also told Saturday's news conference the main difference between him and the Communists was that "the Communists want to build a Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and I want to build a civilized law-based state."

He also expressed the hope that parliament would soon approve a national budget for 1996 for "it is impossible to live without it."

Passing over to the issue of the Black Sea Fleet, a naval force Ukraine and Russia have agreed to divide between themselves, the president said the only problem that remained unsolved was "the status of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine and conditions for its basing." "This is both an economic and political issue," he added.

Kuchma said that, since he was going on holiday on Saturday, he would not meet the speaker of Russia's State Duma (lower house of parliament), Ivan Seleznev, who arrives in Kiev on Monday [26 February].

The president will spend his brief holiday in the Ukrainian resort of Truskavets.

Ukraine: Kuchma Criticizes Parliament Speaker

LD2302214696 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1805 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kiev, February 23 (Interfax - Ukraine) — The speech by Verkhovna Rada Chairman Oleksandr Moroz addressed to the Socialist Party conference last Saturday "has shown his real face", President Leonid Kuchma believes.

"The people, who used social-democratic slogans as a cover, have now thrown off their masks", he told Ukrainian newsmen on their way home, and added he was happy about that.

L. Kuchma noted that "that should have happened sooner or later", and recalled that "earlier, Oleksandr Moroz signed the Constitutional Accord, supported the government program and contributed towards the adoption of the budget in first reading. Why did not he

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say then that all of this was 'antinational'"?, L. Kuchma inquired.

Addressing the Socialist Party conference, O. Moroz declared for a change in the socio-economic course of Ukraine's leadership. He also said that the presidential rule in Ukraine was assuming the features of an "authoritarian- bureaucratic regime".

The President has strongly rejected the possibility of passing any Law of the procedure for the adoption of Ukraine's new Constitution, the draft of which is being currently discussed in Parliament. "We have a Constitutional Accord on how a new Constitution shall be adopted", he said.

L. Kuchma has also severely criticized the attempts of the Parliament Speaker "to take over the functions of the executive power".

Ukraine: Marchuk, Plant Directors Discuss Nuclear Industry Reform

LD2302221096 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1805 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kiev, February 23 (Interfax-Ukraine) — Ways to reform Ukraine's nuclear power industry are under discussion at the meeting of Ukraine's Prime Minister Yevhen Marchuk with directors of five Ukrainian nuclear power plants.

The meeting is being attended by Directors of Zaporizhzhya NPP Vladimir Bronnikov, South-Ukrainian NPP Valeriy Fuks, Rivne NPP Vladimir Korovkin, Khmelnitskiy NPP Viktor Sapronov and Director of Chernobyl NPP Sergey Parashin.

The Premier told the newsmen that "it was only nuclear power plants that, due to stable operation, saved the situation during the energy crisis this winter". According to him, NPPs accounted for 40 per cent of Ukraine's total power output, although normally they account for 25 per cent.

Alongside with this, he said, the NPPs may lose in operating stability "for purely economic reasons".

According to him, the meeting is working out a "procedure to make the entire system of management in nuclear power industry more efficient and give each NPP second wind".

"Nuclear plants should be granted more economic independence", the Premier said.

Ye.Marchuk disclosed that he was planning to visit the Chernobyl NPP and Slavutych, the town where its personnel live. He will be accompanied in his trip by the directors of all nuclear plants of Ukraine.

Director of Zaporizhzhya NPP V.Bronnikov referred to nonpayments for supplied power as the key problem of this sector. According to him, which results in insufficient investment in the industry's prospective growth and safety.

According to Director of Rivne NPP V.Korovkin, his plant put out a six trillion karbovanets worth of power in January 1996. The revenues reached only 32 billion krb. The payroll expenses, including taxes, amounted to 400 billion krb.

Asked by IF-U about fuel supplies, Director of the South-Ukrainian NPP V.Fuks said that the country's NPPs are in a better situation than other sectors of the energy industry. "However, nonpayments may make our situation tougher", he said and added that there are no problems with Russian fuel supplies.

The NPP directors disclosed that "provided sufficient funding", the 4-th unit of the Rivne NPP and 2-th unit of the Khmelnytsky NPP may be completed and launched by early 1998.

According to Director of Zaporizhzhya NPP V.Bronnikov, it has been decided to set up an ad-hoc group to submit specific proposals to the Cabinet of Ministers.

Ukraine: Deputy Sees Signs of 'Already Emerging' Terrorism

AU2302213496 Lvov ZA VILNU UKRAYINU in Ukrainian 20 Feb 96 p 1

[Unattributed report: "Ukraine's Supreme Council Is Drafting a Law on Combating Terrorism"]

[FBIS Translated Text] **Ukraine's Supreme Council is drafting a law on combating terrorism.** As the UNIAN Press Agency was told by Mykhaylo Ratushnyy, one of the authors of the draft law, a working group is currently studying the corresponding legislation of Russia and other countries. He stressed that terrorism is not a major problem for Ukraine, but signs of it are already emerging. In the opinion of the deputy, who belongs to a right-wing party, the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, the only legal group in Ukraine that has signs of terrorism is the "Union of Soviet Officers," which was created in Uman in Kiev Oblast. This organization resorts, in particular, to open threats against those journalists who condemn the war in Chechnya; the organization's documents contain calls for using force.

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Ukraine: Parliament Approves Law on Special Crimean Economic Zone

LD2302231396 Kiev UNIAN in Ukrainian 1740 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Kiev — Today, the Supreme Council of Ukraine approved the final version of the law "On some issues of levying taxes on and regulating currency transactions carried out by businesses in the North-Crimean experimental economic zone 'Syvash'." Under the law, raw materials, materials, and equipment (except for goods subject to excise duty) that are imported into Ukraine by registered businesses of the experimental economic zone "Syvash" for their own production needs, are not subject to import tax and VAT. The tax on profits made by those enterprises is subject to a 50 percent reduction if the money thus saved is used to implement investment projects in that zone. The "Syvash" zone businesses are not subject to the compulsory sale of part of their currency earnings "if the currency funds thus saved are used for the development of the zone."

The law was drafted by the parliamentary Commission for Financial Affairs and Banking as an alternative to the Supreme Council's draft resolution under the same name, which had been submitted by the Cabinet of Ministers. Viktor Suslov, the chairman of the commission, said the main difference between the approved law and the government's draft law lies in the fact that the law limits additional privileges and clearly stipulates that preferential conditions apply to the given economic zone only and cannot be transferred to other zones. During the debate on the draft law, a proposal was made to set the dateline for its validity by 1 January 2000.

Ukraine: Rally Demands Russian Status for Sevastopol, Crimea

LD2402104096 Kiev Radio Ukraine World Service in Ukrainian 0800 GMT 24 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Some 120 people who took part in a rally in Sevastopol yesterday evening declared that, from a legal viewpoint, Sevastopol remains Russian territory and demanded that the Russian Federation State Duma should fix this status of the city in the Russian Constitution. The participants in the rally declared their conviction that Sevastopol and Crimea will again become part of Russia through a peaceful referendum, which will be held when true patriots and proponents of statehood come to power following the presidential elections in Russia.

Economic Issues

Ukraine: Sevastopol Energy Chief on Decoupling of Russian Network

MM2302141196 Moscow KRASNAYA ZVEZDA in Russian 21 Feb 96 p 3

[Report on interview with "Sevastopolenergo" Board Chairman Vladimir Pechnikov by Vladimir Pasyakin: "Disconnection of Energy System Threatens Ukraine and Crimea with Collapse"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The energy systems of Russia and Ukraine were completely disconnected a few days ago. This is largely the result of the large-scale Ukrainian miners' strike, which has led to a crisis in the state's energy system. Russia could simply no longer go on bailing Ukraine out, as this would have a disastrous effect upon its own energy system.

"What happened was not a surprise," Vladimir Pechnikov, chairman of the board of "Sevastopolenergo," said, "the majority of Ukraine's heat and electric power stations have been operating of late on the basis of using supplies immediately, that is to say, the fuel goes straight into the furnaces as soon as it is delivered. Some electric power stations have now shut down because of the cessation of coal mining. The frequency in the electricity networks is now close to its minimum potential rated value and is characterized by constant emergency shutdowns to prevent a disaster — the complete breakdown of the whole system. If this does happen, each region will have to try to survive on its own, using its own power stations. For example, working at full capacity, the Sevastopol heat and electric power station [TETS] will be able to meet 28-30 percent of the city's needs. This will only be enough to ensure the functioning of the city's vital services — hydraulic power systems, the supply of water, a few automatic telephone exchanges in Sevastopol city center, and a bakery. All the rest, including trolleybus transport, will come to a halt. All enterprises, factories, establishments, stores, hospitals, and residential areas will have their power supply cut off. Incidentally, the Sevastopol TETS has fuel-oil reserves sufficient for three days only."

"What will the situation in Crimea be like if the Ukrainian energy system crashes?" — I asked Pechnikov.

"Even more critical than in Sevastopol," according to Vladimir Filippovich, "as Crimean sources are capable of meeting only 10 percent of electricity requirements. Admittedly, in that case I think that part of Sevastopol's electricity supply would be transferred to Crimea, thereby worsening Sevastopol's own position."

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It is clear that in that situation the Black Sea Fleet, the Ukrainian Navy, and other power structures of the Crimea and Sevastopol will be left to face their problems on their own.

"Even though the Ukraine's coalminers are winding down their strike," Pechnikov stressed, "they will need to consume increased electricity to organize production, which is now impossible without cutting off the power to other facilities."

Heaven forbid that this should happen, of course. And only Russia will be able to save Ukraine from the collapse caused by the destruction of its energy system. Neither the United States nor other Western powers are in a position to rescue Ukraine by feeding power into its electricity power supply lines. The accusation that Russia is cutting off the supply of gas to Ukraine is invalid — the same amount of gas is being supplied as before. Russia remains true to the accords it signed as a strategic partner, which it is to Ukraine not just in word but in deed.

Certainly, given these conditions, the leadership of Ukraine should make an adjustment to its economic and foreign policy and not just declare Russia a strategic partner but actually pursue a policy which is in keeping with such a partnership.

Ukraine: Miners' Strike Takes Toll in Energy Supply

964F1092A Donetsk DONBASS in Russian 10 Feb 96 p 1

[Article by Viktor Tachinskiy: "The Strike. Pending Negotiations"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Yesterday morning, according to information from the miners' strike headquarters, 85 mines, 17 mine construction administrations, three plants, two service stations, and 19 enrichment plants were standing idle; 81 mines were operating but not shipping. Coal workers intend to get full compliance with their demands.

The strike has been going on for a week and a half. Looking back, we can summarize the first results. The fact that the desperate miners were heard can perhaps be called the most important thing: Money to pay debts on wages and back pay has begun to come in, the Supreme Soviet adopted a decision on state support of the coal industry, and president of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma signed the Edict on Restructuring of the Coal Sector.

In short, there has been some headway. But at what a price! Coal reserves are exhausted. Because of the sharp decline in fuel deliveries, energy producers have begun to use state reserves. The situation in electricity production in the oblast is critical. The Ministry of Energy and Electrification of Ukraine is presently studying the question of excluding Donetsk Oblast from Ukraine's unified energy system.

That is the payment for the ostrich-like policy of procrastination and delays. If the sector must be shut down in order to resolve its problems, does that mean that the entire population must come out onto the square to draw attention to the social problem?!

So the strike has dragged on. Obviously its leaders understand that, too. That is precisely why a delegation of miners headed by the chairman of the central committee of the Trade Union of Coal Industry Workers of Ukraine, Viktor Derzhak, set off for Kiev again to hold negotiations. The first time the delegation returned with nothing—the government could not bring itself to sit down at the negotiations table. Will it happen somehow this time?

Ukraine: Agricultural Exports, Imports in '95 Detailed

WS2602110496 Kiev UKRINFORM in English 0820 GMT 26 Feb 96

[From the "Current Events" feature]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] According to data provided by the Ukrainian Statistics Ministry, Ukraine exported agricultural products worth about 2.7 billion dollars in 1995. Products exported through barter operations accounted for 34 percent of the total volume of exports.

In 1995, 1,342,000 tons of grain were exported. This figure includes 1,100,000 tons of barley exported to Poland, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. About 170,000 tons of food-quality wheat were sold, mainly to Russia, Belarus, and Turkmenistan under intergovernmental agreements.

In 1995, Russia was the major purchaser of other basic products. It purchased 78 percent of the total quantity of sugar sold by Ukraine in 1995 (the total value of all sugar exported was 872 million dollars), 90 percent of alcoholic beverages (total exports: 363.9 million dollars), 90 percent of meat and meat products (total exports: 242.8 million dollars), 54 percent of vegetable oil (total exports: 164 million dollars), and 85 percent of butter (total exports: 150.4 million dollars).

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Belarus

Belarus: Lukashenka Affirms Support for Oil Deal With Russia

LD2602113196 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1058 GMT 26 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] MINSK, Feb 26 (INTERFAX-WEST) - Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has declared that the threats of "telephone terrorists" cannot stop the successfully unfolding process of integration between his country and Russia.

He regards such threats "as acts of resistance to the cooperation project between the Novopolotsk oil refinery and Russian LUKoil and Yukos oil corporations," he said in an appearance on national television Sunday.

The project entails a $300-million loan to the plant in north Belarus for the construction of a new refining unit. The Russian side is to supply Novopolotsk with the necessary amount of raw material for its operation at full capacity, while the Belarusian side will lease the refinery to LUKoil and Yukos for seven years and offer the right to purchase 51 percent of shares, if it is privatized.

An anonymous call was received last Thursday saying a time bomb was planted at the community center in Novopolotsk where Lukashenka was to meet with refinery workers. The presidential security service insisted on holding the meeting in a city square. Sappers did not discover any bomb at the community center.

In his televised speech, Lukashenka said that in addition to LUKoil and Yukos, 44 other Russian companies are delivering oil to Belarus and "criminal capital is behind half of them." The planned cooperation agreement should leave the shady dealers out of the game, the president felt. "They will lose as much as $100 million a year. That is why the president is being pressured," Lukashenka said.

Belarus: Ford Venture To Produce Passenger Cars Approved

WS2602123196 Minsk Radio Minsk Network in Belarusian 1100 GMT 26 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has instructed Prime Minister Mikhail Chyhir to draft and issue — within a 10-day period — a government resolution addressing the establishment of the Ford Belarus Belarusian-U.S. joint venture in the industrial site in the [name indistinct] settlement to organize the production of passenger cars.

Presidential Administration head Mikhail Myasnikovich has been instructed to prepare — within a 10-day period — a draft presidential edict on including this industrial site in the above- mentioned joint venture's authorized fund.

This was how the head of the state resolved the conflict between the Ford company and the labor collective of the Minsk-based tractor factory who opposed the taking away of its property — a prospective testing plant — which, it was assumed ,could help resolve the crisis by improving the quality of produced goods.

Belarus: Communist Faction Head Interviewed

WS2202134796 Minsk NARODNAYA GAZETA in Russian 15 Feb 96 p 2

[Interview with Belarusian People's Deputy Syarhey Ivanavich Kalyakin, head of the Supreme Soviet faction of Communists, by Pavel Stasevich; place and date not given: "I Am a Soviet Man From the Sovetskiy District"]

[FBIS Translated Text] **The faction of Communists differs from all the other factions of the current Supreme Soviet in the number of its members and the degree of its influence. The Belarusian Communist Party's [PKB] impressive victory during the Supreme Soviet elections is one of the phenomena of our tumultuous and politically changeable time.**

People's Deputy Syarhey Kalyakin heads the Belarusian Supreme Soviet faction of Communists. He is a relatively young man and represents the wave of "new" communists. Precisely this definition was in my mind when I was preparing for my meeting with him. Therefore, the first question was simple and rational.

[Stasevich] Syarhey Ivanavich, can you explain in simple words what the difference between the former and the current Communist parties is?

[Kalyakin] We have much in common, but there are also differences. We continue to pursue the course of the former Communist party and we inherit its legacy.

As regards the difference, first of all, we are not the ruling party. This implies that the people joined the PKB not for the sake of career and other benefits, but precisely due to their convictions; they came to us when the party was semi-legal.

Precisely this specifies the general climate and mutual relations in the party. It is a strong, united organization, and what happened to the former Communist party after the notorious events of August 1991 does not threaten it....

[Stasevich] What do you think were the major mistakes of the then ruling Communist party?

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[Kalyakin] Mistakes were made long before 1991. The party was ruined by its leaders's self-assurance and arrogance, by the lack of knowledge of the real situation, and by the inability to act in extraordinary situations.

When a wave of rallies and workers' meetings emerged in the country, the party went into its shell and its leaders did not launch a sincere discussion with the people. In addition, there were also many casual people in the PKB.

[Stasevich] So, who must be blamed in this case — the people or the entire party system?

[Kalyakin] There is an entire complex of reasons. What took place at the time and what is currently taking place is in fact the fulfillment of Dulles' notorious doctrine addressing the ruining of the USSR and undermining it from the inside. One can also disagree with it, but everything developed according to the scenario written 50 years ago.

The second issue is the economic recession, the "halt" in the scientific-technical revolution. But the people always want to live better than they live now. When it was suggested to them that in order to improve one's life, it is only necessary to ruin the existing system, the majority believed in this.

But this devastation did not create a "Swedish" paradise. What we have now in Belarus is nothing but the aftermath of the breakup of the USSR. I think that the references to the Czech Republic, to Hungary, and to Poland are wrong, because all these countries were not part of the USSR system; thus, it was easier for them to adapt to the changed situation.

As regards Belarus, it was the "assembly shop" of the USSR. It is still bound hand and foot with such relations. Did Belarus need such giants as its tractor factory or others enterprises, if it was not part of the USSR? This is why we favor close cooperation with Russia and the establishment of an economic union. This will be a different union, not the USSR; it will be a stronger one. If such a union is not set up, all former fraternal republics are doomed to death in political, economic, and cultural terms.

[Stasevich] There is another opinion regarding this issue. My colleague from a Baltic state said: Since we have fallen into the pit together, it is necessary to get out individually and then to assist one another....

[Kalyakin] You know I think that the situation of the people in the Baltic states differs significantly from the one of the Belarusians. They have their own history and specifics. We were part of the Russian empire for some centuries, and before that we were part of the Polish Republic. This implies that for a long time we were part of another state, which was larger. One must take this into consideration, because precisely this is the reason for sociopolitical sentiments in society.

Therefore, I personally and my communist colleagues perceive the breakup of the USSR negatively. In historic terms, we have already lost some 40 years — 40 years of development!

The people began to realize this and, therefore, they voted for communists. They have already faced unemployment, the lack of financial means, and the lack of confidence in the future.

[Stasevich] But all the people favored the perestroyka....

[Kalyakin] Yes, both the country and the party needed some kind of a shakeup. Frankly speaking, I myself still cannot say precisely if it was a deliberate destruction, or if "they simply wanted to improve the state of things, but again failed to do so." Only history will answer this question.

[Stasevich] Is your party safe from such things now? Is it safe from stagnation or from perestroyka?

[Kalyakin] Yes, it is safe now. But only at the present moment! Because it is not a ruling party.

[Stasevich] What if it becomes a ruling party?

[Kalyakin] All the same, I think, there are guarantees against grave mistakes. There is a multiparty system in Belarus now, and no one has monopoly on truth. Given such conditions, no party will "fall asleep." Generally speaking, no one can provide 100-percent guarantees....

[Stasevich] Judging from how the new Supreme Soviet began its work, there is an obvious lack of the Belarusian Popular Front [BNF], an opposition. Is this a false impression?

[Kalyakin] It only seems to you that everything is developing peacefully. In reality, there is a fight inside the legislature. We have a very serious political opponent, the United Civic Party. This is not the BNF, which, in my opinion, has no serious ideological basis. In addition, the BNF interprets the "national idea" too widely. In general, let us have a more intense look at the BNF. This organization emerged on the wave of perestroyka and its first primary objectives were of a cultural nature. Then the BNF shifted to clear-cut anticommunist positions and took advantage of slogans which were attractive to the people: the fight against the nomenklatura, against their benefits, and so on. Later they used a prohibited tool: they began to make capital out of the people's tragedy, Chernobyl.

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[Stasevich] Did they do this because the party concealed everything?

[Kalyakin] Not everything is so simple about this issue. The accident took place on Ukrainian territory, and the Ukrainian side, as far as I know, did not provide any objective information to Moscow — not to mention Minsk — during the first five days of the tragedy.

Second, it was the first nuclear power plant catastrophe in the world. What would happen if all panicked at once? There was enough panic. Believe me, I do not justify anyone, I am simply analyzing the situation from another — not political — viewpoint. The BNF made a policy out of Chernobyl. I remember the following slogans: "The place for the CPSU is in the Chernobyl nuclear power plant!" How could they do so?

The Civic Party is another issue. They pursue a worldwide liberal idea, and they regard private property as the basis for progress. In general, it is an impressive system of a world view.

[Stasevich] What is your — PKB — attitude toward capital? To formulate it in a simpler way: Have you begun to like the rich or are you still supporting the poor?

[Kalyakin] We wish that people's lives improve and that they become wealthier, but only based on their personal labor, not on profiteering. All types of property must be placed in equal conditions. In the perestroyka period, they preferred private property, and what do we have now? Huge amounts of money were converted into cash through cooperatives. Everything disappeared from shop counters; the economy was ruined.

Take commercial banks. Where did they come from? They came from the state pocket as well. In general, there are many similar cases when state property is transformed into private property. This is a grave problem.

[Stasevich] To be brief, which economic problems does the faction of Communists handle now?

[Kalyakin] First, the taxation legislation must be changed. Taxes must become a stimulus, not an obstacle to production.

Second, it is necessary to reform wages. Poverty is also an obstacle to the development of production. Therefore, it is necessary to sharply increase wages, certainly all "pros" and "cons" must be considered. I believe that it would be possible to even accept a certain inflation rate.

Third, it is necessary to alleviate the economic legislation to make it possible to sort things out. This also refers to foreign trade. It is necessary to protect national producers, but competition should not be fully banned. There should be clear-cut state regulation.

As regards foreign investments, the right to purchase or sell land should not be guaranteed for them, as many think, but instead there should be a stable and predictable policy of the state and the supremacy of law Look, investments are currently being made in communist China and Cuba.... As for Belarus, we always go to extremes. Frankly speaking, I do not think that it is possible to build a "paradise" based on the Western assistance. The market is the market and no one will feed one's competitor. Western investors have their interests here.

[Stasevich] What is the PKB stance on the political system in Belarus? Should it be a parliamentary or a presidential republic?

[Kalyakin] I am often asked this question. My answer is as follows: We want Belarus to be a parliamentary republic, to be more exact, a republic of soviets.

Our representative, however, ran in presidential elections. We used them to propagandize our concepts. We respect the people's choice. It is necessary to make it possible for the president to implement his commitments. But this must take place within the framework of the Constitution and the law.

[Stasevich] What is the secret of the viability of the communist idea?

[Kalyakin] The primary principle of socialism, as you know, is that one is paid according to his labor. Living conditions of a lazy person must not be the same as those of a hard-working individual. What is wrong in this concept? What about the ideas of equality and fraternity? The people always strived to implement them. The people will continue to dream of such a just social system. One should not only simplify and represent communism as Khrushchev did: as a free-of-charge sinecure for all. There will be no such communism. There will be a different communism based on honest labor. No one knows when this will come. One should not hurry. I am sure that the idea of a just society — communism — as well as trust in God is immortal. In my opinion, in global terms, our world has no other alternative but socialist development.

[Stasevich] Any faction is comprised of members. How can you describe party leader Kalyakin in human terms?

[Kalyakin] When I ran for the Supreme Soviet, my support group wrote in a leaflet: "A Soviet man from the Sovetskiy District." This is a hard and coarse truth. I was born and went to school in the Sovetskiy District in

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Minsk. Then I served in the Armed Forces and worked as an adjuster in the "Integral" plant. I became a member of the Communist Party there. I wanted to become a scientist in radio electronics. Politics, however, won out. I began with student construction departments in Siberia, Baykal-Amur Mainline railroad, Kazakhstan, and Karelia. I visited all regions of the Soviet Union. Then I occupied various KPB posts. Later I returned to Sovetskiy District, becoming first party secretary of the Sovetskiy KPB District Committee and district council chairman. But a job in the [presidential] hierarchy was not proposed to me. I am 44 years old. I have two children: my daughter is 15 years old, and my son will soon be five years old.

[Stasevich] I know your biography. What about the members of your faction?

[Kalyakin] They are brainy, competent, and responsible people. We have discussions, but joint decisions are obligatory on all. This is our strong side.

Moldova

Moldova: Bergman Says Russian Prosecutor Office Falsely Accused Him

LD2302215796 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1701 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] TIRASPOL, Feb 23 (INTERFAX) — Col. Mikhail Bergman, former commandant of Russia's military garrison in Moldova's Transdniester region, described the accusations of administrative abuse and forgery made against him by Russia's Main Prosecutor's office as fabricated.

"The accusations were presented on the initiative of interested people in Tiraspol and Moscow in order to prevent spreading information on facts of arms sales from the arsenals of the former 14th Army," he said in a telephone interview with Interfax Friday.

"Everything is being done in order to compromise me and primarily former commander of the 14th Russian army General Aleksandr Lebed," Bergman said.

During the trial against Defense Minister Pavel Grachev held this week in Tiraspol, officers called as witnesses confirmed that they were promised high posts provided they presented compromising materials against Lebed, according to Bergman.

Bergman said he is waiting for fulfillment of the court's verdict which recognized the order of Russia's Defense Minister on his dismissal as ungrounded.

"The minister is not in a hurry to restore me in my office in line with the court's decision, and Lt. Gen. Valeriy Yevnevich, commander of the group of Russian forces in Transdniester, has ordered to arrest me if I appear in the commandant's office," Bergman said.

Moldova: Dniester Authorities' Infighting Outlined

964F1168A Moscow NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA in Russian 13 Feb 96 p 3

[Article by Natalya Prikhodko: "The Power Ministers Have Fallen Out: The Former Baltic Special Police Will Restore Order in the Dniester Region"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The public form of any action has become traditional for the Dniester region, which is accustomed to the attention of numerous foreign and domestic news media. The decisive round of the struggle among the leaders of the local power departments is now unfolding before the eyes of the local public, it would seem. Although the actual fact of a struggle is denied by its participants, the confrontation which on the one side involves Vadim Shevtsov, minister of security of the unrecognized PMR [Dniester Moldavian Republic], and, on the other, republic prosecutor Boris Luchik and Interior Minister Ivan Fuchetdzhi is becoming obvious to onlookers.

A reason for the showdown was the detention of 47 employees of the Tiraspol "Security" detective and security agency by local police officers. As representatives of the agency tell it, they were arrested on a contrived pretext and subjected to beatings and humiliation. The true reason for what happened, though, was the fact that the agency had begun to get in the way of local criminal groupings (specifically the one led by the local crime kingpin Karpo), and for this reason the prosecutor and interior minister of the rebel republic, who, not disinterestedly, protected them, sanctioned the measures against "Security."

People have already spoken in defense of the latter in the Dniester region, demanding the resignations of the above-mentioned leaders of the law enforcement authorities and threatening to invite in to restore order several dozen former officers of the Riga and Vilnius Special Police. Some of their former colleagues also work in this agency, incidentally. Vadim Shevtsov, the present minister of security, was once, we recall, a member of the leadership of the Latvian police, but going by the name of Antyufeyev. He himself has refrained from comment on this business and has mentioned merely that the Ministry of Security has, indeed, instituted criminal proceedings, in which the prosecutor and the interior minister are involved in accordance with articles 184-185 (exceeding their authority, abuse of position). In this case, Nina Averina, chairman of the Commission for Legislation, Legality, and Rights and Liberties of the Citizens of the Dniester Region Supreme Soviet, emphasized,

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the law is on the side of the Ministry of Security. Having characterized the detention of the employees of the detective agency as illegal, Nina Averina specified that the procuracy is resisting the investigation. The investigator of the procuracy handling the case, for example, has refused to come and familiarize the members of the commission with the pertinent documents. According to available, but as yet unverified, information, Nina Averina continued, Boris Luchik and Ivan Fuchetdzhi intended to deal with the persons to whom they objected through the agency of criminal elements. Nor can it be ruled out that in an extreme situation they would attempt to make use also of the Dnestr Battalion, which is under the jurisdiction of the MVD.

Not waiting for the probable clash between Dnestr and the former Baltic Special Police, though, Boris Luchik recently submitted his resignation to the president and the chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the PMR. As he affirmed in his final report carried by the newspaper DNESTROVSKAYA PRAVDA, tyranny and lawlessness reign in the republic. In corroboration Boris Luchik termed illegal the investigative actions canceling his prosecutorial directives. In conclusion, in turn, he announced that it was impossible for him to continue to work with the minister of security.

As Deputy Prosecutor Sergey Stepanov explained, the question of confirmation of Boris Luchik's report is to be discussed at a sitting of the Supreme Soviet. Nina Averina contemplates delivering a report at it on the investigation also. Thus the Supreme Soviet and the president of the PMR (who earlier yielded up none of "their people"—even under the pressure of the public accusations of Aleksandr Lebed, commander of the former 14th Russian Army) will now, perhaps, have to choose. But whether the choice that is made influences the realization of the presidential edict on the fight against organized crime will also be of considerable interest to the local community.

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Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan: Defense Minister Departs for Week-Long U.S. Visit

LD2302230996 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1916 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] ALMATY, Feb 23 (INTERFAX) — Kazakh Defense Minister Alibek Kasymov will leave for the United States Friday evening for a week-long official visit.

In an exclusive interview with Interfax in Almaty Friday Kasymov said his visit is aimed at continuing the dialogue between the U.S. and Kazakh Defense Ministries, which began in 1993. In particular, Kasymov is expected to meet with U.S. defense Secretary William Perry in Washington.

Kasymov expressed the hope that the United States will provide legal and other aid to the Kazakh armed forces.

He said he also intends to study the developments in the U.S. army in order to adopt all that would contribute to a qualitative reform of the Kazakh Armed Forces, taking into account the post-Soviet experience.

Kasymov believes Kazakhstan currently has controlled and sufficiently trained troops prepared for a qualitatively new stage of reform. According to him, the time has come for such a reform that would turn the army into small, mobile, well-trained and equipped troops.

At the same time he acknowledged that the economic situation in Kazakhstan does not allow for reforms to be carried out reforms simultaneously in all Armed Forces, which is why they will be carried out in stages. The first stage will affect Air Force, air defense and ground troops, said Kasymov.

Kazakhstan: Miners in Belousovka Continue Strike

LD2302220696 Almaty KARAVAN-BLITS in Russian 20 Feb 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] Ust-Kamenogorsk — As we have already reported, 81 miners at the Belousovka mine have stayed underground 630 meters down and refused to return to the surface until their demands are satisfied. They want work and money.

On 19 February Galina Yegorova, chairman of the regional committee of the trade union of workers in the mining and metallurgical industry, reported the following:

"The miners are underground as before. On 16 February Yuriy Zabelin, deputy governor of the [East Kazakhstan] region, went down to them again, and read the reply signed by the governor of the region, which said that a commission will be set up to check the financial and economic activities of the Irtysh plant, to include two representatives of the work-force. Furthermore, a general meeting will be held on the results of this work, and the Ust-Kamenogorsk Lead and Zinc Plant joint-stock company will by 21 February give advance payment to the Irtysh plant for the guaranteed supply of concentrate [as received] in April-May this year. The management of the Irtysh plant will direct the funds received to repay wage arrears as the priority."

A total of 35 million tenge have been allocated, of which 25 million are for coal and 10 million for wages. However, the entire wage arrears come to about 80 million, so 10 million will cover only the wages for October. The miners have refused to accept the money.

They insist on full payment of the arrears, and demand a meeting at government level. "We intend," Yegorova said, "to send three miners to the Ministry of Industry and Trade at the expense of the trade union."

On their days off work, all the miners underground have undergone medical tests. They do not feel bad. They have adapted to their life; they have built wooden flooring to sleep on, for example, and they distribute the foodstuffs sent down according to need. According to G. Yegorova, everybody who remains above ground is actively supporting the miners. They are being sent placards and letters with words of support, while the correspondence from below is being read out on radio. On 17 February a conference of representatives of workforces was held in Ust-Kamenogorsk at the initiative of the leaders of the Solidarity workers movement. Those gathered voiced their solidarity with the Belousovka miners, and called [on those assembled] to unite in the struggle for their rights. At the meeting a town strike committee was elected, which is also open to workforces elsewhere in the region.

Tajikistan

Tajikistan: Foreign Ministry Denies Country Lives at Russia's Expense

LD2402163996 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1551 GMT 24 Feb 96

[By Galina Gridneva]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] DUSHANBE, February 24 (ITAR-TASS) — The Tajik Foreign Ministry denied Russian media reports that Tajikistan "lives and eats at the expense of Russian taxpayers" and described them as "peremptory and insulating for all people of Tajikistan."

A statement issued by the ministry on Saturday said that a report carried by one of the Russian television

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broadcasting companies was an "ill-intentioned attempt to incite social hatred between representatives of various regions of Tajikistan."

The ministry noted that "such statements have lately begun to appear more and more often in the Russian mass media, including state-owned ones."

In this connection, Tajikistan "points to the inadmissibility of the above facts as contradicting ally and friendly relations laid out in a number of inter-state Russian-Tajik documents," the statement said.

Tajikistan: Co-Leader of Cease-Fire Implementation Committee Kidnapped

LD2402172896 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1649 GMT 24 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] DUSHANBE, Feb 24 (INTERFAX) — Co-Chairman of the commission controlling the implementation of the agreement on suspending combat actions in Tajikistan Zafar Rakhmonov, who represents the opposition in the commission, was kidnapped by unknown persons in central Dushanbe, the Tajik capital, Saturday, the Tajik Interior Ministry told Interfax.

According to eye-witnesses, four unknown persons in plainclothes attacked Rakhmonov and knocked him down. The kidnappers put a sack on Rakhmonov's head, dragged him into a car and left in an unknown direction.

An investigation has been launched. Investigators are now considering possible causes of the kidnapping, the same source said.

Some independent observers in Tajikistan did not discount the possibility that this was a provocation launched in order to later accuse the Tajik government of exacerbating relations with the opposition.

The joint commission under the U.N. aegis has worked in Dushanbe for about a year. Its powers expire on February 26, 1996, or on the same day when the agreement on suspending combat actions between Tajik government troops and opposition forces runs out.

Tajikistan: Opposition Envoys Fear for Safety, Threaten To Leave

LD2502125996 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1232 GMT 25 Feb 96

[By Galina Gridneva]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] DUSHANBE, February 25 (ITAR-TASS) — Representatives from the opposition in the Joint Reconciliation Commission on the observance of the Tehran ceasefire agreement do not rule out the possibility that they will leave Dushanbe soon for lack of safety, Yusuf Khakimov, a member of the Commission, told Russian and foreign journalists on Sunday in a statement issued in connection with the kidnapping of their representative Zafar Rakhmonov in the centre of the Tajik capital on Saturday.

The incident happened, Khakimov said, because Commission members' guards from among Security Ministry personnel were withdrawn in recent days for unknown reasons. Therefore, Khakimov pointed out, the opposition representatives have to ask for temporary political asylum in the Iranian Embassy in Dushanbe because they do not believe the guarantees of either the government of Tajikistan or the U.N. Permanent Observer Mission.

Tajikistan: Rebels Blame Government for Observer's Kidnap

LD2502141496 (Clandestine) Voice of Free Tajikistan in Tajik 0600 GMT 25 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Soldiers of [Tajik President] Rakhmanov's despotic regime yesterday afternoon set their hand to a shameful act, which is inconsistent with the Tehran cease-fire agreement and international law. Unidentified armed men in masks leapt on Haji Muzaffar Rahmonzoda [Zafar Rahmonov], leader of the opposition delegation in the joint commission observing the cease-fire, near what used to be called the Detskiy Mir bookshop in Ayniy Square at midday. They beat him up, put him in a sack, then drove off in a car in an unknown direction. There is no report on the condition and whereabouts of Haji Muzaffar Rahmonzoda.

At the same time as Haji Muzaffar Rahmonzoda was being abducted, soldiers of the regime besieged and searched the homes of (Jaloliddin Mahmud) and (Izatullo Ibodzoda), another two Tajik opposition representatives, but these two people managed to leave the buildings and to reach the UN mission in Dushanbe. The fate of (Abdullo Qodiriy) and (Muhammad Yusuf Hakim), two other representatives of the Tajik opposition, is not known either.

Darko Silovic, head of the UN mission to Tajikistan, asked fugitives (Jaloliddin Mahmud) and (Izatullo Ibodzoda) to leave the mission building by that evening, because he could not protect their lives.

Just two weeks before this shameful event, the regime announced its readiness to guarantee the safety of the Tajik United Opposition Forces' representatives on the joint commission observing the cease-fire. Repeated statements by them and the UN mission have borne no fruit.

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The detention and abduction of Haji Muzaffar Rahmonzoda and the siege of the other two opposition members' houses prove that the regime's authorities were involved in these events and that they do not want to solve the Tajik crisis. Otherwise, they would have accepted the worthy proposals of the United Tajik Opposition Forces to prolong the cease-fire and the Tajik negotiations would have continued.

Professor Haji Akbar Turajonzoda, first deputy leader of the Islamic Movement and chairman of the United Opposition Forces negotiating delegation, has criticized the Dushanbe regime and demanded that it safeguard the security of the Tajik opposition members of the UN-sponsored commission and find the delegation's head and its two members.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Albert Chernyshev, who is an adviser to the delegation of Rakhmanov's regime at the negotiations, has told opposition representatives of his anxiety at the sad events which have taken place in Dushanbe.

The Tajik opposition leadership has protested these events to the sponsors of Emomali Rakhmanov's regime from Moscow, and said that they will take practical steps if the situation does not change.

Tajikistan: Foreign Ministry Statement Denounces Abduction

LD2602093896 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 0838 GMT 26 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] DUSHANBE, February 26 (ITAR-TASS) — The Tajik governmenmt "resolutely denounces the criminal act" of abducting Zafar Rakhmonov, the co-chairman from the opposition of the joint conciliation commission on observance of the Teheran agreement on temporary cessetion of fire and other hostilities, by unidentified people in Dushanbe on Saturday.

This act is aimed "against the supreme interests of Tajik people", stresses a statement issued by the republican Foreign Ministry.

"There are many forces interested in fanning up the situation and bringing to naught a few positive changes which were reached as a result of painstaking work for the sake of bringing peace and calm to Tajikistan," the document says.

Of special attention is the time of committing the crime. It was carried out precisely when a decision was taken, on an initiative of the government delegation at the inter-Tajik talks in Ashgabat, to call a special session of the republican parliament.

The leaders of the opposition were invited to this session to spell out their position. This clearly anti-Tajik action is also aimed at thwarting efforts by friendly countries and international organisations to achieve accord in order to extend the inter-Tajik agreement on the temporary ceasefire, the statement stresses.

Such actions are beneficial only to those who are interested in escalating terror and violence as well as in kindling hatred and enmity.

"Dushanbe is convinced that only talks and only a peaceful way of settling the conflict will bring a long-awaited peace and calm to Tajik soil for the sake of creating a democratic society in the country," the statement emphasises.

"Republican law enforcement bodies received a strict instruction to catch criminals and to free abducted Zafar Rakhmonov," the document notes.

Rakhmonov was stopped while exiting from the city shopping centre by five men on Saturday, four of whom wore military uniforms.

Following a short scuffle, Rakhmonov was driven away by a car in an unknown direction. Itar-Tass learnt from First Deputy Secutiry Minister of Tajikistan Anatoliy Kuptsov that a joint investigative group, consisting of officers of the security service and the Interior Ministry, is engaged in the search. According to Kuptsov, all possible versions for reasons of the abduction are being investigated.

Tajikistan: Opposition Agrees to Cease-Fire Extension

LD2602101496 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 0847 GMT 26 Feb 96

[By Oleg Kuzmin]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] TEHRAN, February 26 (ITAR-TASS) - The Tajik opposition on Monday stated its consent to an extension of the Tehran agreement on a temporary cessation of fire on new terms, Haji Akbar Turajonzoda, leader of the delegation of the opposition at the inter-Tajik talks, has told Itar-Tass here.

The opposition is ready to extend the agreement for three months and withdraw the demand for an exchange of 150 prisoners of war from each side. The feuding sides should undertake to remain on the positions held by them as long as the Agreement remains valid, the delegation leader said.

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Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan: UNDP Delegation Ends Visit

LD2302190396 Tashkent Uzbekistan Television in Uzbek 1300 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The visit by members of the United Nations Development Program [UNDP] mission to our country has ended. The representatives of this authoritative organization familiarized themselves with the life of our republic and the human rights situation in Uzbekistan over three weeks.

[Correspondent] During the concluding discussion, held with the Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov, the head of the mission, Mr. Ion Popescu, noted with satisfaction that there are many UNDP projects to be implemented, not only in Central Asia, but also in Uzbekistan alone, and that all the necessary conditions for this are in place, and noted the usefulness and efficacy of the recent days.

During the discussion, opinions were exchanged on the various projects of the members of this mission aimed for implementation in our country, as well as economic issues connected with these projects. The representatives' impressions of their visits to the republics of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were also considered in the discussion.

Khaled Malik, the permanent UN representative Uzbekistan, took part in the discussion.

Uzbekistan: Two-Stage UN Human Rights Program Proposed

LD2402104796 Tashkent PRAVDA VOSTOKA in Russian 24 Feb 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] A United Nations Development Program [UNDP] mission, which has studied measures to guarantee human rights and improve the system of state administration in this area in Uzbekistan, has proposed a long-term technical assistance program. Head of the mission, Ion Popescu, told correspondents about this at a briefing held at the UN's Tashkent office.

Over three weeks the UNDP's experts, together with their colleagues from the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] held more than 50 meetings and talks with representatives of various state and public organizations, departments, parties, international bodies, and foreign embassies. Thus the UNDP's conclusions and recommendations reflect various opinions on and assessments of the situation in the republic.

As Popescu noted, the basic democratic institutions which are intended to ensure that civil rights and freedoms are observed in practice (the parliamentary human rights commission, the Constitutional Court and others) have been set up in Uzbekistan in a short space of time, the necessary international agreements have been ratified, and the structure of a civil society is developing. The topical task now is to make them function effectively and to further improve the republic's legal system. In Popescu's view, the main problem is a lack of legal information and relevant documents, insufficient knowledge of international practice, and experience of the activities of comparable institutions in foreign countries, such as the procedure for dealing with complaints, and so on.

The program, which was drawn up with these problems in mind, is intended to be implemented in two stages. The first — from this summer to June 1997 — does not envisage any institutional changes and is directed first and foremost toward rendering technical assistance to state judicial and administrative bodies: courts, the prosecutor's office, ministries, and parliament commissions. Staff at these bodies need special training and retraining, and their technical support needs to be improved.

In the second stage, which is to last until 2000, it is planned to set up a number of new organizations in Uzbekistan, first and foremost a special human rights center, which is intended to embrace the whole Central Asian region. Another center, provisionally called a center for democratic administration, is intended to ensure openness and accountability in the activities of all state bodies and establishments responsible for ensuring that the rights of the republic's citizens are exercised and observed. It will also perform consultative functions for state and nongovernmental organizations, private companies, and so on.

In the view of Uzbek Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov, the value of this program is that it is specific, long-term, and geared to providing an effect over a long period. The proposed range of measures will help to improve the work of courts and the bar, eliminate the shortage of information being faced by both specialists and ordinary citizens, and promote a rise in the standard of legal literacy among the population.

The UNDP and other international donor organizations have been made responsible for funding the program.

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Armenia

Armenia: President Addresses New Regional Chiefs

LD2102221396 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1905 GMT 21 Feb 96

[From the "Presidential Bulletin" feature]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] President Levon Ter-Petrosyan believes that the current reform of the government chain of command has both administrative and political significance.

"New governing bodies are being established in keeping with the constitution of independent Armenia and rely on the force of law, and not on the "uniting and guiding force of the Communist Party, the way it was in the former USSR," President Ter-Petrosyan said at a meeting with the newly-appointed heads of ten regions formed in keeping with the law on Armenia's new administrative and territorial division passed last year. (In the USSR Armenia was divided into 37 districts. - IF).

The regional leaders appointed by the president are Grach Grigoryan (Aragatsot region), David Zadoyan (Ararat region), Sedrak Avanesyan (Armavir region), Ashot Sarkisyan (Vaik region), Ovanes Matznyan (Gugark region), Ovik Ovanesyan (Kotaik region), Pavel Asatryan (Tuvash region), Ararat Gomtsyan (Shirak region). Two other regions, Gegarkunik and Syunik are led by Vladimir Movsesyan, formerly First Secretary of the Armenian Communist Party, and Major- General Suren Abramyan, until recently deputy interior minister.

The capital, Yerevan, has the status of a region, too. President Ter-Petrosyan has appointed 46-year-old Ashot Mirzoyan, previously first deputy minister of social insurance and migration as Yerevan's Mayor.

President Ter-Petrosyan believes that the new chain of command is called to establish effective mechanisms of executive power locally. "Thereby we take the first step towards restoring a unitarian Armenian state," he said and added that the formation of a new system will continue.

Ter-Petrosyan said that the regional leaders would virtually become territorial government ministers. The structures they would command would have to be built from scratch. President Ter-Petrosyan has said that the regional leaders may get down to work already now, because they have the legal basis required for this.

At the same time President Ter-Petrosyan believes that the new regional leaders "may encounter new objectives stemming from the need to perfect or expand the legal space." The Armenian leader pointed to the importance of the law on local self-government, to be submitted to the National Assembly (parliament) shortly. The president is certain that the regional leaders must take the most active part in drafting that law. He believes there still is time for this.

At the same time Ter-Petrosyan said that in the newly-established government structures locally the material, technical and personnel resources of the former district executive committees can and must be used. "We give you all powers you need, use them properly," Ter-Petrosyan told the newly appointed regional leaders and said that their performance would be reviewed at the end of the year.

Ter-Petrosyan also signed a decree on several new appointments.

Economics Minister Andranik Andreasyan was moved to another job. He was replaced by former Deputy Finance Minister Vagram Avanesyan.

The newly appointed Justice Minister is National Assembly Member Marat Aleksanyan.

Armenia: Bagratyan Gives News Conference on Economic Issues

NC2302200596 Yerevan SNARK in English 0744 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Yerevan, February 23 (SNARK) — Armenia's Prime Minister Grant Bagratyan appraised at today's press conference reforms conducted within five years after the declaration of independence in Armenia. He said that the concept of economic development suggested by young Armenia economists stipulated reforms in social, economic and political areas. The reforms improved the situation in the republic compared with 1992 and with some CIS countries.

According to the Prime Minister, Armenian GDP and industrial output rose to 4th in 1993 from 12th in the ranking among the CIS countries. In 1995 a growth of all macro-economic indexes was recorded as compared to 1994:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) — 106.9 percent

Net National Product (NNP) — 105.8 percent
Volume of industrial output — 102.4 percent
Volume of consumer goods — 89.8 percent.

In 1995, GDP was estimated to cost 441,608,500 drams and the volume of industrial production was worth 172,077,200 drams in current prices, while exports totalled 97,408,000 drams or $240 million and imports amounted to 256,021,000 drams or $640 million.

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Regarding the futures goals of the Government, Bagratyan noted the necessity of sweeping reforms in the economic and legal fields at the earliest possible date. According to him, economic advance would begin in 1996 and in two or three years the Armenian nation will live much better.

[Yerevan NOYAN TAPAN in English in a related Yerevan-datelined report at 1243 GMT on 23 February adds the following:

"Total debt of Armenia is $555,000,000, Armenian Prime Minister Grant Bagratyan said at today's press conference. According to him, this year Armenia must pay off $60,000,000, next year — $42,000,000, in 1998 — $43,000,000, in 1999 — $48,000,000, in 2000 — $29,000,000, in 2001 — $26,000,000, in 2002 — $25,000,000, in 2003 — $25,000,000, in 2004 — $26,000,000, in 2005 — $28,000,000. Russia's debt is equal to 85 million USD [U.S. dollars]."]

Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan: OSCE Minsk Group Condemns Karabakh's Refusal To Free POWs

NC2402182196 Paris AFP in English 1659 GMT 24 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Helsinki, Feb 24 (AFP) — The Minsk Group, charged with resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Saturday [24 February] condemned the region's leadership for refusing to release 64 Azerbaijani prisoners of war, following two days of talks here with the parties.

The Minsk Group condemned the "persistent refusal of the Nagorno-Karabakh leadership to release and repatriate the 64 Azerbaijani prisoners of war" almost two years after the cessation of hostilities, according to a press release.

It also demanded that all parties give representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross free access to all places of detention.

Armenians and Azeris are battling over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountain enclave in Azerbaijan populated mainly by Armenians.

Armenian separatists that control the region are demanding autonomy, or that the region be reattached to neighbouring Armenia, while Baku has said it is willing to grant it cultural autonomy.

The conflict has resulted in 20,000 deaths and created more than 500,000 refugees between 1988 and May 1994, when a lasting ceasefire was reached.

Azerbaijani, Armenian and Nagorno-Karabakh representatives held talks in Helsinki from Wednesday to Friday hosted by Finland and Russia, the co-chairmen of the Minsk Group, which was tasked in 1992 by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) with resolving the conflict.

Azerbaijan and Armenia were represented by their deputy foreign ministers, Tofik Zulfugarov and Vardan Oskanyan, while Nagorno-Karabakh was represented by its "foreign minister", Arkadi Ghukasyan.

On Friday, representatives of the Minsk Group — Belarus, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States joined the talks.

The Minsk Group said the Nagorno-Karabakh leadership's refusal to release the POWs was a "direct violation of the Geneva conventions on the protection of victims of war, which they had undertaken to observe," the statement said.

"The leadership of Nagorno-Karabakh cannot but fully realize the fact that the process of settling this military conflict is impossible without the parties' certain commitments and their ability to observe them with responsibility," it said.

The Minsk Group also charged OSCE Chairman-in-Office Flavio Cotti, Switzerland's foreign minister, with raising the issue with the parties' leaders during his visit to the region February 29- March 1.

Azerbaijan: Foreign Minister, U.S. Envoy Discuss Nagorno-Karabakh

LD2602111596 Moscow ITAR-TASS World Service in Russian 0904 GMT 26 Feb 96

[By ITAR-TASS correspondents Sevindzh Abdullayeva and Viktor Shulman]

[FBIS Translated Text] Baku, 26 Feb — The United States intends to step up its efforts to settle the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and President Bill Clinton is interested in this, Joe Presel, U.S. special envoy to the OSCE Minsk Group on Nagorno-Karabakh, has said. He met Azerbaijan Foreign Minister Gasan Gasanov today.

There is now an opportunity to resolve the conflict, according to the U.S. diplomat, and the opposing sides agree with this opinion. If the chance is not taken, the peace process could drag on or be deadlocked, he said. "No third-party power, including Russia and Turkey, is capable of sorting out such a complex problem by itself," Joe Presel stressed.

The Azerbaijan foreign minister viewed the U.S. envoy's arrival as honoring international obligations to resolve the conflict. In his opinion, the visit highlights the

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diversity within the negotiation process toward signature of a political agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Gasanov supported Presel's remarks on the importance of diplomatic efforts to strengthen the cease-fire on the battlefield, which the sides have been observing for over 21 months. However, they are not an end in themselves and should be viewed in the wider context of a peace settlement, he added.

Georgia

Georgia: Shevardnadze, Bundestag Delegation Discuss Caucasus Issues

LD2302221296 Tbilisi Radio Tbilisi Network in Georgian 1800 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze met a delegation of the Caucasus group of the German Bundestag, headed by Willi Wimmer.

The Georgian president spoke about the significance of profound assistance the German Government rendered to Georgia. He also briefed the visitors on the current economic and political processes underway in Georgia.

The Georgian president said that the resolutions adopted by the CIS leaders and the Russian authorities' stance toward Abkhazia stirred up hope for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, which will give incentive to establishing peace in Chechnya and stability in the Caucasus.

In Mr. Shevardnadze's opinion, the expansion of the Europe-Asia corridor will further increase the significance of the region in the world.

Mr. Wimmer spoke of high significance of expanding bilateral relations and broadening integration in the European community during the period of changes in Georgia.

Georgia: Ardzinba Opposes Georgian Version of Federation

LD2302164496 Tbilisi IBERIA in Georgian 1240 GMT 23 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Sukhumi, 23 Feb — Abkhaz separatist leader Vladislav Ardzinba held a news conference in Sukhumi on 22 February. He said that, unfortunately, the Georgian side refused to compromise on Abkhazia's political status. "We have offered Georgia a federative union but Georgia still wants Abkhazia to remain an autonomous republic. We cannot accept Georgia's version of a federation," Ardzinba said.

Georgia: Rallies Demand Resignation of South Ossetian Government

LD2602114296 Tbilisi IPRINDA in Russian 1000 GMT 26 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Tbilisi, 26 Feb — An IPRINDA correspondent has reported, quoting well-informed sources, that the situation in South Ossetia has deteriorated. Rallies demanding the resignation of the government are continuing.

An extraordinary session of the South Ossetian Supreme Council has decided (with 16 votes for and 14 against) that the chairman of the supreme council, Ludvig Chibirov, will temporarily remain in his post. At the same time, it was decided to create an institution of head of state.

According to the same sources, the opposition has 300 fighters based on the premises of the Vibromashina factory, while Chibirov has 100 OMON [Special Purpose Militia Detachment] troops, 200 police and several pieces of armored equipment.

In connection with the deterioration of the situation, the peacekeeping forces in the conflict zone have been placed on combat alert.

Georgia: South Ossetian Deputy Speaker Relieved of Duties

LD2602123396 Tbilisi IBERIA in Georgian 1030 GMT 26 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Tskhinvali, 26 Feb — An IBERIA correspondent has been told at the administration of Shida Kartli province that several days ago (Atsamaz Kabisov), deputy chairman of the Supreme Council of so-called South Ossetia, was relieved of his duties. He is accused of misappropriating a large sum from funds that Russia allocated for South Ossetia.

In this connection, relations between various political parties in Tskhinvali have deteriorated, and rallies are held frequently.

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Estonia

Estonia: Defense Chief on NATO Standards

LD2402105296 Tallinn Radio Tallinn Network in Estonian 1205 GMT 22 Feb 96

[Interview with Colonel Johannes Kert, Estonian defense forces commander by Anne Osvet on 22 February from the "Argipaev" program — live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt]

[Osvet] When discussing the key points of the defense concept the main goal is perhaps to avert aggression. I would then ask what constitutes our greatest danger? Who is our main enemy?

[Kert] The biggest enemy is possible instability in Europe.

[Osvet] And not the big eastern neighbour as the thinking has been?

[Kert] The time has come for Estonian politicians and military men to express themselves also by following professional ethics. The state of Estonia has no enemies as it has been stated in writing in the Estonian defense concept. [passage omitted]

[Osvet] What does Estonia have to do to join NATO? In addition to the Partnership for Peace program and some other individual activities.

[Kert] Let me speak plainly. Concerning NATO standards, our first obstacle on the path to NATO, is our very modest knowledge of the English language. If we teach our officers, NCOs and defense officials to communicate in English, this would be a very big step towards our ability to cooperate with NATO.[passage omitted]

So the most important matters is knowing English, which has to be tackled first. Thereafter we could discuss the use of the same fuel for vehicles, the building up of similar structures, already started by Gen. Aleksander Einseln [former Defense Forces commander]. Then we could talk about the channels for movement of information according to NATO standards, and so on and so forth. Several of these important issues here are being dealt with simultaneously, but we will be moving forward extremely slowly until we have the main standard — language capability. [passage omitted]

[Osvet] You have been asked before how many men are in the reserves in Estonia at present. Do you have any idea now how many thousands or how many tens of thousands they are?

[Kert] Well, yes, I have an overview about how many men, that is, reservists the Estonian state has. I have to say that unfortunately nothing worthy of mention has been done to organize the reserve. How many reservists do we have? We have about 160,000 men of reservist age, and women have so far not been considered at all. Organizing the reserve will provide the answer to the question of how many organized reservists we do have. [passage omitted]

I would not consider it practical nor expedient to set up a professional army in Estonia until Estonia has a 100 percent guarantee from the West, [word indistinct] this obviously means until it is a NATO member state. [passage omitted]

[Osvet] If I am correct, you have said that Estonia is able to mobilize 80,000 men. Or is this not exactly the case?

[Kert] Well, this is where the defense minister's words have been ascribed to me, at a press conference last Friday [16 February].

[Osvet] So Andrus Oovel says that 80,000 men could be mobilized?

[Kert] Yes.

[Osvet] But how large do you think the number could be?

[Kert] I think it would be important to be able to mobilize 80,000 men, or at least 80,000 men.

[Osvet] But do you think this is realistic at the moment?

[Kert] This is impossible, this is not possible today. We have no arms or clothing for them. There is no point in sending men into war if they are not trained. [passage omitted]

Estonia: Meri Discusses Cooperation With Russia

LD2502202296 Tallinn Radio Tallinn Network in Estonian 2000 GMT 24 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Estonia is in favor of cooperation with a European-style Russia, on the assumption and condition that this is going to develop in the European tradition as cooperation between two independent and equal partners, Estonian President Lennart Meri said in his Independence Day speech today.

Meri said that the Estonian state was doing everything in order to uphold human rights but at the same time indirectly criticized human rights violations in Russia.

In his speech marking the 78th anniversary of the Estonian state, Meri emphasized that one should not repeat the mistakes of 1939, which were followed by Soviet occupation.

The strengths of Estonia should be common sense, ability to learn, and willingness to act, Meri said. He

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said that citizens should think about their state — being a state is not a game, a state must be taken seriously, or otherwise it will fade into non-existence.

Estonia should focus more on strategic long-term thinking, Meri said. He warned Estonia against being lulled by economic successes.

Lithuania

Lithuania: Brazauskas Signs Decree on New Government

LD2302224896 Moscow INTERFAX in English 1831 GMT 23 Feb 96

[From the "Presidential Bulletin" feature]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] President Algirdas Brazauskas signed a decree to nominate a new Lithuanian government Friday [23 February].

The seventh Cabinet, appointed after Lithuania became independent in March 1990, will include seven new ministers and 12 ministers from the old Cabinet.

The new Interior Minister will be ex-head of the Lithuanian state delegation to negotiations with Russia, ambassador and MP Virgilijus Vladislovas Bulovas, aged 56.

Ex-secretary (deputy minister) and director of the Ministry of Finance's Budget Department Algimantas Krizinauskas, aged 38, will become the Minister of Finance.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Self-Government Petras Papovas, aged 49, was named as the Minister for Management of Reforms and Self-Government. Earlier, this position belonged to present Prime Minister Mindaugas Stankevicius.

Vaidotas Abraitis, aged 53, was appointed as the Communications and Computer Technology Minister. Prior to this appointment, he was a deputy communications and computer technology minister.

The only woman in the Cabinet is Aldona Baranauskiene, aged 48. She was named to the Construction and Urban Policies Minister. Prior to this appointment, she was a deputy construction and urban policies minister during two years.

The posts of the ministers of economy and power engineering so far remain vacant.

Foreign Minister Povilas Gylys, Defense Minister Linas Linkevicius, Trade and Industry Minister Kazimieras Klimasauskas, Agriculture Minister Vytautas Einoris, Railroad Minister Jonas Birziskis and Environmental Protection Minister Bronius Bradauskas will remain in the Cabinet.

When introducing the new Cabinet, Brazauskas said he saw it as a positive factor that the majority of the ministers belonged to the previous government.

The government which will work for about a year will have to resolve many urgent problems, Brazauskas said. He wished the new cabinet "not to fritter away their energies but to make decisions promptly and wisely, avoiding defense of the interests of particular groups."

Among the problems on which the Cabinet must concentrate, Brazauskas gave priority to financial issues, fulfillment of the state budget and the budget of the state social insurance fund.

Brazauskas emphasized the necessity to guarantee enterprises the national currency's stability. "Continuing rumors about possible devaluation of the litas do immense damage," he said. Brazauskas said he deemed it necessary to adopt a law which would stipulate that the litas' exchange rate versus the base currency will not be changed at least until the year 2000.

Under legislation, the government is not responsible for the situation in the banking system, Brazauskas said. Nevertheless, he said it was necessary to pay attention to problems regarding banks and control their performance, primarily that of those banks in which the state has the controlling interest. A corresponding service within the Finance Ministry should be created for this purpose, he said.

Regarding taxation problems, Brazauskas called for "removing the problems concerning the allegations that the income tax will be raised, which irritates the society, and change the approach to the taxation issue, which means not only thinking of replenishing the budget but also seeking that taxes encourage business activities and investments.

Brazauskas also said he considered it specially important to resolve the problem concerning debts and fines on yet unrepaid back debts which had been accumulated since 1991- 1992.

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Brazauskas also criticized the energy sector which, he said, "was left untended." He said he deemed it necessary to revise principles for privatization of energy utilities. "The problems of that industry cannot be resolved just by searching for credits or plugging holes," he said.

Brazauskas also said Lithuania must improve laws concerning foreign investments and accelerate the creation of free economic zones."

"We need liberalization of economic activities," he said.

Under the Lithuanian Constitution, the new Cabinet will start office after its program is approved by the parliament. The program will be submitted to the parliament before March 1.

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